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The Media and Politics section of this collection of conference proceedings contains the following 11 papers: "Characteristics of Readers of Religious Publications for Political Information" (Judith M. Buddenbaum); "Is 'Nightline' Biased?: A Content Analysis of the Issue of Gays in the Military" (Chuck Hoy and Terry Scott); "Newspaper Coverage of the 1960 Civil Rights Act" (Sherrie L. Wilson); "Voters' Use of Schemata in Processing Political Information from the Media: The 1992 Presidential Election" (Karon Reinboth Speckman); "Marginalizing Perot: Visual Treatment of the Candidates in the 1992 Presidential Debates" (Larry G. Burkum); "Conceptions of Salience: Their Roles in Voters' Information-Processing of Issue Milieus" (David Domke and Dhavan Shah); "Anonymous Government Sources in the 'New York Times' Coverage of the Middle East Peace Accords, the Conflict in Bosnia and the Clinton Health Care Package" (Bryan Denham); "An Analysis of Front Page Newspaper Photographic Coverage of the 1992 Presidential Election Campaign" (Sarah Wright Plaster); "A Case in Cynicism: Network Coverage of the 1992 Presidential Campaign" (Sandra Dickson and others); "Crossing the Line: Constructing 'Lesbianism' in the Achtenberg Debate" (Diane Helene Miller); and "Gender as a Factor in Newspaper Disclosures about the Private Lives of Politicians: A Comparative Study of Newsroom Managers" (Sigman Splichal and Bruce Garrison). (NKA)

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Part VII: Media and Politics

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Characteristics of Readers of Religious Publications for Political Information

by

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Paper presented to the Mass Communication and Society Division of the Assciation for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, national convention, Atlanta, Georgia, August 1994.

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Characteristics of Readers of Religious Publications for Political Information

Because of its potential political implications, research on religious television has proliferated in recent years. However, very little is known about religious publications, which also may serve as a source of political information and a vehicle for political mobilization.

Board estimates that there are at least 1000 such publications with circulations ranging from a few dozen to well over a quarter million.[1] Ideologically both denominational publications and non-denominational ones range from the very conservative to the very liberal. In contrast to religious television which generally has a conservative religio-political orientation, the diversity of religious publications may mean they can never become the force that religious television is sometimes perceived to be. Still, the sheer number of religious publications and their reach suggest their role in the political process should not be ignored.

Although studies of the audience for religious publication do not appear in the communication literature, related research indicates that involvement in one form of religious activity, for example, church attendance, is correlated positively with other religious activities such as watching religious television[2] and reading religion news.[3] Therefore, readers of religious publications most likely share demographic, religious, and political characteristics with church members and with the audience for religious television and for religion news in daily newspapers.

Demographically, church members,[4] and the audience both for religious television[5] and for religion news in daily newspapers[6] are largely made up of older, married women who are active in a church and who are conservative in religion, politics and in their general approach to life. Those characteristics may also define the audience for religious publications. However, studies consistently indicate that men and those with higher socioeconomic status are more likely than women to use print media; women and those with lower education and incomes tend to be heavier users of television.[7] Therefore, the audience for religious publications may differ demographically from the audience for religious television.

Regardless of demographics, users will almost certainly be active in their church and consider their religion highly important. Indeed, it hardly makes sense to hypothesize the opposite. Based on studies of church members[8] and of the audience for religious television[9] and religion news,[10] they also may be quite conservative. However, here there may be substantial differences between religious traditions as well as heterogeneity within them.

Working within the community ties tradition, Stamm and Weis found that, for Catholics, being active in a local congregation, identifying with it and subscribing to the diocesan newspaper were all positively correlated with each other and with subscribing to the local general circulation newspaper.[11] However, there is little reason to believe that the significant, positive correlations they found in a Catholic population will also be found in all Protestant traditions.

Both Catholic and Mainline teachings generally have a universalist orientation while Conservative Protestant churches, on the other hand, are more likely to promote a dualistic outlook that fosters withdrawing from the world.[12] As part of this withdrawal, members may also shun secular media.

McFarland and Warren found that Fundamentalists expressed greater desire to read pro-fundamentalist articles than anti-fundamentalist ones; however, they also found that those fundamentalists who measured higher on quest scales were more likely than others to express interest in reading both anti-fundamentalist articles and ones on secular topics.[13]

Religion-as-quest represents an aspect of mature religion.[14] As such it taps a desire to view information which both supports and contradicts one's beliefs. Because measures of quest orientation are not merely a substitute for religious fundamentalism, but have demonstrated value in predicting selective exposure to belief-confirming information regardless of religious beliefs,[15] we might expect that quest orientation would be more strongly associated with use of mass media than with use of religious publications which would most likely support one's religiously inspired worldview, and therefore provide little in the way of additional information or insight. For similar reasons, we might also expect that those for whom religion is primarily a source of comfort would be motivated to use religious publications that support their general outlook instead of mass media. Therefore, scoring low on measures of religion-as-quest and high on measures of religion-as-comfort may be related to a general preference for religious sources over secular ones.

Schultze notes that Evangelicals have a "love-hate" relationship with the mass media, which to them, represents "a marvelous technology" to use in bringing others to Christ and "an apostate culture of despair" to be avoided lest it lead them astray.[16] Consistent with that observation, Buddenbaum found that religious liberals were more likely than religious conservatives to use the mass media for political information in the context of a presidential election campaign.[17] Therefore, use of religious publications for political information may be positively correlated with mass media use among Catholics and Mainline Protestants, but negatively correlated in more conservative Protestant traditions.

Differences in religious beliefs and orientations also suggest that political interest and activity should be higher among users of religious publications in Catholic and Mainline churches than in conservative Protestant ones. However, that may not be true because of the rise of televangelism and the mobilization of the New Christian Right.[18] Both this mobilization and theological differences suggest that use of religious publications for political information will be more strongly associated with political conservatism among conservative Protestants than among Mainline Protestants and Catholics. Wilcox points out that political effects of religious television are greater among members of conservative churches who have previously been politicized within their local congregation.[19]

However, here too, there may be differences across traditions as well as heterogeneity within them. Dudley and Hernandez note that Seventh-day Adventists who read the conservative Adventist publication hold very different religious and political views than Adventists who read the more liberal church publication.[20]

The diversity of religious publications combined with conflicting theological strains within even the same Christian tradition may mean that none of the relationships between use of religious publication for political information and political beliefs or behaviors will be as strong as those between religiosity and use. Still, the number and reach of religious publications suggests use of them for political information may have some societal consequences.

Therefore, this study was designed to determine the extent to which religious publications are used for political information. It also examines the demographic, religious and political characteristics of those who use them, as well as their exposure to other information sources.

Methodology

Data for this study come from a telephone survey of Middletown (Muncie, Indiana) residents 18 and older conducted during the three weeks prior to the 1992 presidential election. Using a random number generator, phone numbers were selected from among all eligible exchanges in the Muncie SMA. The 987 residents who responded represent 52 percent of the eligible phone numbers contacted.

Religious publications present a distinctive set of beliefs that may have political relevance even if the publication is primarily religious in nature. Therefore, **use of religious publications** was measured by an index combining responses to questions asking respondents whether they read religious publications "a lot," "some," "a little" or "not at all," and whether they use them "a lot," "some," "a little" or "not at all" for political information.

Factor analysis and correlations were used to create measures of **religiosity, religious beliefs** and **orientations, political interest, political activity, use of religious television** and **use of mass media** for political information. All scales have a Cronbach's alpha of at least .7. Single items were also used for additional measures of **beliefs**, **politics** and the **demographic characteristics** of marital status, gender, age, education, and household income.

For this study, **religiosity** was measured by two scales tapping ties to a local congregation and the salience people attach to their religion. The church ties measure was created by combining questions asking respondents how often they attend worship services, how active they are in the church and whether they consider themselves a "leader," "active but not a leader," "an average church member," "not really a part of the church," or "not a member" of it.

The measure of salience combined a question asking, "How important is your religion to you," with a likert item asking for agreement/disagreement with the statement, "My whole approach to life is based on my religion."

Four **belief** measures were used in this study. Christian orthodoxy was measured with a scale combining responses to likert items positing Biblical inerrancy, the reality of miracles and Jesus Christ's imminent return to earth. Additionally, respondents were asked whether they consider themselves born again and whether "being charismatic or speaking in tongues is an important part" of their religion.

Christian orthodoxy, being born again and being charismatic are all associated more closely with conservative Protestantism than with Mainline Protestantism or Catholicism. Therefore, as a fourth measure, answers to questions asking respondents if they identify with a local church and, if so, which local church or synagogue they attend most often were used to analyze data by religious traditions. Most congregations were assigned to a tradition along denominational lines, but some individual congregations were placed in a different category because of the congregation's distinctive characteristics. Thus, the groupings approximate distinctive Christian theologies.

Traditions used in this study include: Pentecostal (fundamentalist, charismatic - Assembly of God, Apostolic, Church of God-Mountain Assembly, Church of God Full gospel, Church of God in Christ, FourSquare Gospel, Full Gospel, Pentecostal and some independent congregations); Fundamentalist (not charismatic - Church of Christ in Christian Union, Nazarene, Seventh-day Adventist, Church of Christ, Church of God, Church of God-Anderson, Independent, National, Separate and United Baptist and some individual congregations); Evangelical (conservative, born again - Southern Baptist, Bible Holiness, several Brethren congregations, Presbyterian-PCA, non-denominational and some individual congregations); Mainline (moderate to liberal, not charismatic or born again - African Methodist Episcopal, American Baptist, Christian Science, Church of Christ-Independent, Christian-Disciples of Christ, Lutheran-ELCA, Presbyterian-USA, Unitarian Universalist, United Methodist); and Roman Catholic. Because there were so few non-Christians in the sample and because those with no religion did not use religious publications, these groups were generally excluded from analyses.

Two religious **orientations** were considered in this study, in addition to the salience measure which taps an intrinsic or God-centered approach to religion. In contrast, the comfort orientation taps an extrinsic or self-centered form of religiosity. The measure combined likert items calling for agreement/disagreement with the statements, "What religion gives me most is comfort in time of trouble," and, "God rewards good people and punishes bad people."

Quest orientation was measured by combining likert items asking for agreement/disagreement with the statements, "I constantly question my religious beliefs" and "I never doubt the existence of God." The second statement is the antithesis of the quest orientation and was reverse coded.

All items used to measure the intrinsic, extrinsic and quest orientation were drawn from previously published studies devoted to developing valid measures for dimensions of religiosity.[21]

Three **information sources** were used as independent variables. These include a single question asking whether the respondent's pastor talks about politics "a lot," "some," "a little," or "not at all;" a measure of religious television use constructed by combining questions asking how often the respondent watches religious television and how much the respondent uses religious television for political information; and a measure of mass media use created by combining questions asking respondents whether they expend "a lot," "some," "a little," or "no effort" getting political information from the mass media and whether they pay "a lot," "some," "a little," or "no attention" to stories about the presidential election campaign that they happen to come across in the mass media.

Political measures used in this study tapped interest, activity and ideology. The interest measure combined questions asking whether the respondent was "very," "somewhat," "not very," or "not at all interested in the presidential election," and whether the outcome is "very important," "somewhat important," "not very important," or "not at all important" to the respondent personally.

Activity was measured by combining questions asking respondents whether they are "very active," "somewhat active," "not very active," or "not at all active in politics," with responses to individual items asking whether they have "worn a campaign button or display a bumper stick or campaign sign," "written letters to the editor on behalf of a candidate or issue," "attended a meeting, demonstration, or rally," "volunteered in a political campaign," and "contributed money to a candidate or issue." Response possibilities for each individual activity were "a lot," "some," "a little" and "not at all."

Measures of political ideology included single questions asking respondents for their party affiliation and whether they would describe their "overall political views" as "strongly conservative," "conservative," "middle of the road," "liberal," or "very liberal."

Findings

Data analysis indicates that only about one-fourth of the population make any use of religious publications for political information. However, as expected, both use of religious publications for political information and the characteristics of those readers vary by religion.

In Middletown, at least, almost all users are Christian. Only two of the nine members of non-Christian religions reported any use; none of the approximately 15 percent of all respondents who said they have no religion reported any use. Among Christians, about half use religious publications at least a little for political information, whereas only 25 percent of the population use them.

Among all Christians, about 10 percent are in the high use category and an equal number are in the second highest category. However, use varies greatly by religious traditions. It is highest among Pentecostals and Evangelicals and lowest among Fundamentalists, Mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics. Whereas about one-third of the Evangelicals and about one-fourth of the Pentecostals are heavy or very heavy users of religious publications for political information, only about 10 percent of the Mainline Protestants reported similarly heavy use. Among Roman Catholics, half never read religious publications and only about 20 percent are in the top two use categories in spite of the fact that most of them receive the diocesan newspaper through membership in a local parish. Most Protestants in Middletown must subscribe as individuals if they wish to read a religious publication. (See Table 1)

In general, religious and political characteristics are more related to religious publication use than are demographics. However, the correlates differ somewhat depending on whether one considers the population as a whole or only those who identify themselves as Christian.

Among all respondents, readers are significantly more likely than non-readers to be older men. However, among the Christians, who make up more than 90 percent of those who attend to religious publications, readers are significantly more likely than non-readers to be older, better educated married women. In both groups, readers are significantly more likely to be heavy users of religious television for political information and to describe themselves as politically active and Republican. Both groups also describe themselves as politically conservative, but the relationship is significant only for the total population.

Users are also significantly more likely than non-users to have strong church ties, to consider their religion very important and to hold orthodox Christian beliefs. They are also significantly more likely to describe themselves as born again and charismatic and more unlikely to have a quest orientation. Among Christians, but not for the population as a whole, use is also significantly and positively correlated with considering religion a source of comfort. For all Christians, use of religious publications is also positively correlated with use of mass media for political information.

Just as the audience looks somewhat different depending on whether one looks at the population as a whole or considers only the Christian segment of it, the audience profile varies somewhat from one Christian tradition to another.

For Pentecostals and Evangelicals, use of religious publications for political information is unrelated to demographics. Across all Christian traditions, there is a tendency for readers to be married and female; however, the relationships are significant only for members of Mainline and Catholic churches. Mainline and Fundamentalists readers are also significantly more likely than non-readers to be older and more highly educated. Catholic readers, too, are significantly more likely to be older; however, there is a slight tendency for them to be less educated. Having a higher income is significantly related to readership only for Catholics. Fundamentalist and Mainline readers also tend to have a high income, but Pentecostal and Evangelical readers tend to have lower incomes than other members of their tradition. (See Table 2)

Regardless of demographics, across all traditions use of religious publications for political information is significantly and positively correlated with having close activity ties to the church, considering one's religion very important and holding orthodox Christian beliefs. Readers are also more likely than non-readers to describe themselves as born again and charismatic; however, being born again is significantly related to readership only among Fundamentalist, Evangelical and Mainline Protestants, while being charismatic is significantly related only for Evangelicals. (See Table 2)

Unlike members of the other traditions, Fundamentalist readers tend not to have a comfort orientation, but in no case was that orientation significantly related to readership. At the same time, scoring low on the quest orientation measure is related to readership across traditions, but the relationship is significant only among Fundamentalists. (See Table 2)

Only among members of Mainline churches, is there a tendency for readers to say their pastors do not talk about politics; however, the correlations between a pastor talking politics and use of religious publications is significant only for Pentecostals and other Fundamentalists. However, regardless of tradition, users of religious publications for political information are also significantly more likely than non-users to watch religious television for political information. Mass media use for political information is significantly and positively correlated with religious publication use only for Fundamentalists and Evangelicals. Among Pentecostals and Catholics, there is a tendency for readers of religious publications not to use the mass media for political information. (See Table 2)

Across all tradtions, use of religious publications for political information is positively correlated with political interest and activity. However, the correlation with interest is statistically significant only for Fundamentalists; the correlation with activity is significant for Pentecostals, other Fundamentalists and Mainline Protestants. (See Table 2)

Regardless of tradition, readers of religious publications for political information are more likely than non-readers to be interested in politics and politically activie. However, the relationship with party is statistically significant only for conservative Protestants; the correlation with conservatism is statistically significant for all Protestants, but not for Roman Catholics. (See Table 2)

Entering the variables by groups into regression equations indicates that for all Christians and for all traditions except the Pentecostal, religious and political measures are more predictive of use of religious publications for political information than are demographics, which explain only about 10 percent of the variance. (See Table 3)

For all Christians, and for all groups except Pentecostals, church ties and religious salience are significant predictors of religious publication use; alone they account for about one-fourth of the variance. For Catholics, they account for about two-fifths of the variance. Similarly, the belief measures account for between 10 and 20 percent of the variance, for all traditions except the Pentecostal. However, orthodoxy is a significant predictor in only three traditions and being born again is predictive only for members of Mainline churches. (See Table 3)

In contrast, the orientation measures do little to predict use of religious publications. Although users from all traditions, tend to have a low quest orientation, that orientation is predictive only for the total sample. Comfort orientation is predictive only for Fundamentalists, but the direction is the opposite of what was expected. Those Fundamentalists who do not consider religion primarily a source of comfort are most likely to use religious publications. (See Table 3)

Whereas the orientation variables explains very little variance, exposure to other information sources accounts for about one-third of the variance in religious publication use for Pentecostals, and between 9 and 16 percent for the other traditions. Religious television use is a significant predictor for all Christians and within all traditions. Low use of mass media for political information is a significant predictor of religious publication use for Pentecostals, but, contrary to expectations, high use is predictive for Fundamentalists and Evangelicals. (See Table 3)

The political measures predicting readership also differ across traditions. Collectively, they account for only about 7 percent of the variance in religious publication use for all Christians and for members of Mainline churches, who are almost half of all Christians in the population studied. They explain just over one-third of the variance in religious publication use among Pentecostals, but none of the variance for Catholics. Being interested in politics is a significant predictor only for Fundamentalists. For both Pentecostals and Mainline Protestants, being uninterested in politics tended to predict use of religious publications; at the same time, being active in politics was a significant predictor for both traditions. (See Table 3)

For all traditions, being conservative predicts use of religious publications, but it is a significant predictor only for the sample as a whole, for Fundamentalists and for Mainline Protestants. Although party affiliation is a significant predictor only for Evangelicals and Mainline Protestants, regression analysis indicates that for Mainline Protestants and Catholics, being Democrat predicts use of religious publications for political information; being a Republican predicts use among Pentecostals, other Fundamentalists and Evangelicals. (See Table 3)

Using only those measures which were predictive in at least two of the five religious traditions indicates that for all Christians, and for each tradition, between one-third and one-half of the variance in use of religious publications for political information can be explained by marital status, age, church ties, religious salience, Christian orthodoxy, religious television use and mass media use, political activity, political conservatism and party affiliation. (See Table 5)

For all Christians, being married, being tied to a local congregation through various kinds of activity, using religious television for political information, being politically active and being politically conservative are significant predictors. However, the results are very probably affected by the number of Mainline Protestants in the population studied. Within the Mainline tradition, being older and married, tightly tied to the church, considering religion very important, using religious television for political information, and being politically active and conservative, but describing oneself as a Democrat are all significant predictors. (See Table 4)

For Pentecostals and Catholics, high religious television use and low mass media use predict use of religious publications for political information. For Pentecostals, low religious salience and high political activity are also significant predictors, whereas for Catholics, high salience and strong church ties are predictive. For Fundamentalists only strong church ties and political activity predict religious publication use. However, none of the 10 measures is a significant predictor for Evangelicals although the overall regression equation is statistically significant. (See Table 4)

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that, in Middletown at least, use of religious publications for political information is almost exclusively a Christian phenomenon. But even among Christians, only about half even read religious publications. Fewer than 10 percent are in the high use category, but an equal number are in the second highest category. However, use varies greatly by Christian tradition. Use of religious publications for political information is highest among Evangelicals. It is also quite high among Pentecostals, and somewhat lower among other Fundamentalists and Roman Catholics. Use is lowest among Mainline Protestants.

In general the audience for religious publications looks more like the profile of daily newspaper readers than the audience profile for religious television. When one examines the population as a whole, readers are more likely than non-readers to be older better-educated, married men. However, reader demographics differ somewhat by Christian tradition. Use is correlated with being less educated only among Catholics, while it is correlated with having lower income only for Pentecostals and Evangelicals.

Although these demographic differences suggest that the diversity in religious publications leads to a somewhat diverse audience for the political information they contain, regression analysis suggests the audience may really be quite similar across the various traditions.

As expected, use is most strongly related to religiosity, whether one analyzes all Christians or each of the Christian traditions individually. Indeed, church ties and salience alone account for between one-fourth and one-half of the variance in use of religious publications.

Consistent with previous research showing that religious and political conservatism and religious and political liberalism are linked, there is also a tendency, regardless of religious tradition, for users to hold orthodox Christian beliefs and to describe themselves as politically conservative and Republican. Indeed, political conservatism predicts use of religious publication for political information for all Christians and within all Christian traditions except Catholicism. In the population as a whole and within each Christian group use of religious publications is also linked to political activity.

In spite of Pentecostals' apparent low interest in politics, the political variables alone account for just over one-third of the variance in the use of religious publication within that tradition. Those same four political variables account for about one-sixth of the variance in religious publication use for other Fundamentalists and for Evangelicals, but less than 10 percent of the variance for members of Mainline churches and none for Catholics.

Here, differences may be linked to political directives from the pastor. In both the Pentecostal and other Fundamentalist traditions, there is a significant and positive correlation between the amount the pastor talks about politics and use of religious publications for political information. The relationship is stronger, but not statistically significant, for Evangelicals than for Catholics. In contrast, Mainline Protestants who say their pastors rarely talk politics are more likely to use religious publications for political information than are those whose pastors talk more openly about politics.

Those findings suggest that Wilcox' contention that the political effects of the electronic church are greatest on those who have previously been mobilized to political activism by their local congregation may also extend to religious publications. Here, it is noteworthy that use of religious television for political information predicts religious publication use for Pentecostals, Mainline Protestants and Catholics, while low use of mass media for political information is predictive of religious publication use for Pentecostals and Catholics.

The number of people who use religious publications for political information, both in the population as a whole and within each tradition, is relatively small. Those who do use them most likely read different publications. However, the political consequences of reading religious publications may be magnified by the fact that it is the active, leadership element that uses them most heavily for political information. Like the pastor, these leaders have the position and the incentive to share information with other church members and encourage them to accept a particular viewpoint. Where that view is grounded in religious beliefs, as communicated through church publications, they may also have the ability to mobilize church members on behalf of specific issues or candidates.

The fact that low use of mass media is predictive of use of religious publications for political information among Catholics and Pentecostals suggests that the proliferation of specialized publications in today's information society could lead to a fragmention of society if members of ideological groups become isolated from each other and less willing to understand each other and work together.

At the same time, commonalities in the religious and political beliefs across Christian traditions of those who attend to religious publications for political information suggest that non-denominational publications circulating across traditions could be an effective mobilization tool.

Use of religious television for political information is one of the strongest predictors of religious publication use, even among Mainline Protestants and Catholics who would seem to have little in common theologically or culturally with the Pentecostal and Fundamentalist televangelists who dominate religious television in Middletown. Therefore, televangelists might be able to use religious publications as a way to reach out to church leaders across denominational lines and, through them, build a *broad-based* religio-political coalition.

Because either societal fragmentation or coalition building would have important societal consequences, both researchers and journalists should devote more attention to the content of religious publications, to their users and to the religious and political consequences of that use. Regularly reporting findings from such efforts would serve those who might want either to join or block mobilization efforts on behalf of specific issues or candidates but would otherwise be unaware of the possibilities.

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21. Richard A. Hunt and Morton B. King, "The Intrinsic-Extrinsic Concept: A Review and Evaluation, Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 10(4):339-356, 1971; Lee A. Kirkpatrick and Ralph W. Hood, Jr., "Intrinsic-Extrinsic Religious Orientation: The Boon or Bane of Contemporary Psychology of Religion?" Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 29(4):442-462, 1990; McFarland and Warren, "Religious Orientation"; Batson and Schoenrade, "Measuring Religion as Quest: 1)"; Batson and Schoenrade, "Measuring Religion as Quest: 2)"

Table 1

Religion and the Use of Religious Publication for Political Information

	Use				
Tradition	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5
Pentecostal (n=59)	37.3	13.6	22.0	11.9	15.3
Fundamentalist (n=130)	49.2	20.8	10.0	8.5	11.5
Evangelical (n=65)	29.1	25.5	9.1	14.5	20.0
Mainline (n=375)	51.2	21.1	16.0	8.3	3.5
Roman Catholic (n=80)	52.5	12.5	16.3	5.0	13.8
Non-Christian (9)	77.8	22.2	----	----	----
No Religion (278)	----	----	----	----	----

Chi Square 60.01 df. 24 p < .001

Table 2

Correlates of Use of Religious Publications for Political Information for All Christians and for Five Christian Traditions[1]

		Use of Religious Publications				
Correlate	All Christian (n=709)	Pente-costal (n=59)	Fundamen-talist (n=130)	Evangel-ical (n=65)	Mainline (n=375)	Roman Catholic (n=80)
Demographics						
Mar.Status	mar.***	mar.	mar.	mar.	mar.***	mar.**
Gender	fem.**	fem.	fem.	fem.	fem.**	fem.**
Age	.196***	.163	.160*	-.046	.264***	.398***
Education	.080**	.097	.236***	.079	.103**	-.004
Income	.031	-.154	.051	-.059	.025	.248**
Religiosity						
Church Ties	.321***	.313**	.466***	.476***	.230***	.589***
Salience	.448***	.226*	.456***	.492***	.415***	.579***
Beliefs						
Orthodoxy	.321***	.296**	.432***	.350***	.237***	.307***
Born Again	yes***	yes	yes***	yes*	yes***	yes
Charismatic	yes***	yes	yes	yes*	yes	yes
Orientation						
Comfort	.399***	.020	-.082	.053	.009	.032
Quest	-.134***	-.196	-.248***	-.178	-.108**	-.077
Information Sources						
Pastor	.050	.302**	.192**	.124	-.021	.109
Religious TV	.721***	.486***	.366***	.254*	.354***	.349***
Mass Media	.071*	-.109	.262****	.225*	.044	-.012
Politics						
Pol. Interest	.126***	.044	.344***	.150	.043	.130
Pol. Activity	.181***	.408***	.216**	.077	.172***	.136
Conservatism	.008	.243***	.313***	.234*	.158***	.129
Party	Rep.***	Rep.**	Rep.*	Rep.*	Rep.	Rep.

[1] Chi square used as test of significance for being born again, being charismatic, party affiliation, marital status and gender.

*	$p < .1$
**	$p < .05$
***	$p < .01$

Table 3

Predictors of Use of Religious Publications for Political Information[1]

	Use of Religious Publications					
Predictor	All Christian (n=709)	Pente-costal (n=59)	Fundamen-talist (n=130)	Evangel-ical (n=65)	Mainline (n=375)	Roman Catholic (n=80)
Demographics						
Mar. Status	.141**	.075	-.060	.324	.142*	.389*
Gender	.016	.223	.131	-.074	-.004	.084
Age	.152***	.143	.264**	-.089	.231***	.204
Education	.060	.099	.350***	.155	.072	-.161
Income	-.063	-.128	-.027	-.288	-.039	-.082
Adj. R^2	.047	---	.058	---	.071	.141
F	4.55***	.83	2.08*	.64	4.16***	2.77**
Religiosity						
Church Ties	.255***	.251	.351***	.315*	.212***	.265**
Salience	.314***	-.055	.128*	.359**	.338***	.465***
Adj. R^2	.250	.002	.275	.311	.223	.409
F	72.71***	1.03	17.48***	9.80***	30.44***	19.67***
Beliefs						
Orthodoxy	.222***	.222	.321***	.141	.160**	.301**
Born Again	.160***	.127	.171	.253	.207***	.055
Charismatic	.057	.038	-.009	.173	.016	-.021
Adj. R^2	.120	.027	.153	.120	.089	.055
F	20.60***	1.38	6.25***	2.78*	7.66***	2.05
Orientation						
Comfort	-.078	-.242	-.301***	.085	-.028	-.135
Quest	-.152***	-.037	-.133	-.127	-.057	-.127
Adj. R^2	.023	.016	.081	---	---	---
F	6.05***	1.32	4.81**	.377	.415	.827
Information Sources						
Pastor	.073*	.280**	.083	.111	-.021	.144
Rel. TV	.371***	.504***	.296***	.249*	.362***	.447***
Mass Media	.052	-.159**	.194**	.242*	.041	-.101
Adj. R^2	.149	.342	.146	.088	.124	.159
F	34.94***	10.36***	7.68***	2.64*	14.29***	5.54***
Politics						
Pol. Interest	.085*	-.115	.309***	.127	-.031	.072
Pol. Activity	.131***	.451***	-.010	.213	.184***	-.028
Conservatism	.234***	.052	.247**	.222	.246***	.165
Party	-.022	.136	.039	.369**	-.212***	-.053
Adj.R^2	.072	.354	.145	.169	.074	---
F	9.29***	5.49***	4.68***	2.99**	5.10***	.36

---

[1] Values are Betas. Dummy variable analysis used to enter marital status, gender, being born again, being charismatic and party affiliation into the regression equations. Positive values are associated with being married, female, born again, charismatic and Republican.

* $p < .1$ ** $p < .05$ *** $p < .01$

Table 4

Best Predictors of Use of Religious Publications for Political Information[1]

	Use of Religious Publications					
Predictor	All Christian (n=709)	Pentecostal (n=59)	Fundamentalist (n=130)	Evangelical (n=65)	Mainline (n=375)	Roman Catholic (n=80)
Demographics						
Mar. Status	.089**	-.018	.047	.104	.102**	.106
Age	.048	.135	.015	.000	.108**	.123
Religiosity						
Church Ties	.148***	.133	.320***	.237	.112**	.304**
Salience	.246***	-.270*	.092	.290	.289***	.338**
Beliefs						
Orthodoxy	.055	.021	.163	-.005	.004	.002
Information Sources						
Rel. TV	.218***	.535***	.122	-.003	.213***	.247**
Mass Media	.023	-.244**	.087	.155	.016	-.171*
Politics						
Pol. Activity	.150***	.316**	.143*	.123	.150***	.032
Conservatism	.098***	.061	.099	.055	.118**	-.134
Party	-.029	.199	-.060	.229	-.142***	.051
Adj. R^2	.327	.432	.333	.332	.304	.462
F	31.22***	4.65***	6.74***	3.34***	15.44***	7.02***

---

[1] Values are Betas. Dummy variable analysis used to enter marital status, and party affiliation into the regression equations. Positive values are associated with being married and being Republican.

* $p < .1$
** $p < .05$
*** $p < .01$

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Is "Nightline" Biased
A Content Analysis
# of the Issue of
Gays in the Military

(for submission to AEJMC Radio-TV Journalism Division)

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(Also enter paper into student paper competition)

Abstract

Research has shown television news organizations to present bias coverage of political issues. Bias can take several forms, from the way a story is presented to the sources used. One news program with a history of bias coverage is "Nightline." As a program, "Nightline," provided extensive coverage on the issue of gays in the military. This article reviews whether the news program "Nightline," was biased in its coverage of the gays in the military issue.

Abstract

Research has shown television news organizations to present a bias coverage of issues of political importance. Bias reporting can result in detrimental effects on the audience, and affect the outcome of a political issue. "Nightline," is one news program past research has shown to present bias coverage of political issues.

Bias news coverage is achievable in several ways. Two of these are: the way an issue is framed, and the sources used. Most news stories receive only cursory coverage by television. "Nightline," devoted over two hours of programming to the issue of gays in the military during the week of January 25, 1993.

The emotional issue of gays in the military evenly divided the country between pro and con. It was also an issue that received extensive coverage by "Nightline." This article reviews the coverage of this issue by that program to determine whether it was biased.

Is "Nightline" Biased?
A Content Analysis of the Issue of Gays in the Military

INTRODUCTION:

News is one of the predominant program genres currently available to television viewers. News programming is diverse, with a range that includes: the newsbreaks of short duration; the evening network newscast and news magazines; the twenty-four hour news service offered by Ted Turner over CNN. When the television news medium reports on controversial issues it is often accused of bias by people on both sides of the issue.[1]

Some validity may be found in these accusations. Paul H. Arntson discussed how the inherent structural organization of a network newsroom can contribute to bias.[2] C. Richard Hofstetter and Terry F. Buss, state bias can be attributed to fact selectivity. D. Charles Whitney, et al., showed how bias can be reflected through geography and sources.[3] An audience can perceive bias in a balanced and impartial news story based on the values they hold.[4]

Based upon the theories of agenda-setting, as espoused by Maxwell

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[1] Richard L. Worsnop, "Battle Lines," Knoxville News Sentinel, 21 March 1993, sec F, p. F1.

[2] Paul H. Arntson and Craig R. Smith, "News Distortion As A Function of Organizational Communication," Communication Monograph, 45 (November 1978): 371.

[3] D. Charles Whitney, Marilyn Fritzler, Steven Jones, Sharon Mazzarella and Lana Rakow, "Geographic and Source Biases in Network Television News 1982-1984," Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 33 (Spring 1989): p.159.

[4] C. Richard Hofstetter and Terry F. Buss, :Bias in Television News Coverage of Political Events: A Methodological Analysis," Journal of Broadcasting, 22 (Fall 1978):517.

McCombs[5]; and cultivation, as expressed by George Gerbner,[6] news organizations which fail to provide a balanced view of society's issues can contribute to distorted views held by the audience on these same issues. The danger of such a biased presentation of news can serve to sway public opinion in one direction or another.

Reporters and news organizations contend that their reports are balanced and impartial.[7] This, they feel, alleviates any concerns the public may have about the potential effects of biased reporting on the audience. However, the criticism continues from people most affected by the stories television news bureaus report on.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Many issues of social importance are covered every year by media. Television is recognized as the major source of information and news for the majority of Americans.[8] Recently, the issue of openly gay people being allowed to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces came to the forefront of America's political agenda. This issue was covered extensively by all news media, including television.

The issue of openly gay military personnel is an emotional one for people on both sides of the matter. Accusations of news bias have been expressed by both those supporting and those opposing lifting the ban on gay and lesbians in the military. Robert Knight, Director of the Cultural Studies Project of the Family Research Council, (whose organization opposes lifting the ban), complained that the national news media highlights issues important to gay women and men. Robert Bray, of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, (whose organization supports lifting the ban), is concerned that "every worst stereotype about gays and lesbians will be brought forward."[9] As of yet, no studies have been found that would support either of these viewpoints: that the news media presents either a favorably or unfavorably biased view on the issue of allowing openly gay people in the military.

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[5] David L. Protess and Maxwell McCombs, eds., Agenda-Setting: Readings on Media, Public Opinion and Policymaking (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates), p.17

[6] Werner J. Severin and James W. Tankard, Jr., Communication Theories: Origins, Methods, and Uses in the Mass Media, 3rd ed. (White Plains: Longman Publishing Co.), p.249-50.

[7] Michael Massing, "Ted Koppel's Neutrality Act," Columbia Journalism Review, 27 (March/April 1989): p. 30.

[8] Melvin L. DeFleur, Lucinda Davenport, Mary Cronin and Margaret DeFleur, "Audience Recall of News Stories Presented By Newspaper, Computer, Television and Radio," Journalism Quarterly, 69 (Winter 1992): 1022.

Based upon an ABC News/Washington Post poll, the view of the American public on this issue is evenly divided, with 47 percent for and 47 percent against allowing openly gay people in the military.[10] With public opinion so evenly split, any hint of bias by the media could have the potential to sway public opinion enough to affect this issue's outcome on the ultimate decision to be made by our national leaders.

The issue of gays in the military was covered on many television news programs, both at the network and local levels. Whether this coverage was biased still remains to be determined. However, because of time restraints, most television news programs devote only a short period of time to any one story; or, if more time is devoted to a story, (such as in a television newsmagazine program), it is generally covered only one time. With the preponderance of television news sources, it is both time consuming and impractical to analyze all coverage of an issue to determine news bias.

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[9] "Battle Lines," Knoxville News Sentinel. p. F1.

[10] ABC News, "Nightline," 26 January 1993, "Controversy Continues Over Gays and Military," Ted Koppel.

A more practical approach would be to analyze the contents of a television news program that provided more extensive coverage of the issue of gays in the military. One such program was ABC News' "Nightline," which devoted four out of five programs to this issue during the week of January 25th through the 29th 1993. Although analysis of one specific program dealing with an issue will only determine whether or not that news organization was biased, it can provide the basis for a more extensive analysis of other television news programs dealing with this issue.

"Nightline" has been accused of presenting a biased viewpoint, (primarily source bias) of past issues, based upon an analysis of the program by the media watchdog group, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting.[11] Based on these allegations, one might logically conclude that, if this issue was presented in a biased fashion by television news organizations, it would likely be found in the content of the "Nightline" programs dealing with this topic. While an analysis of just one television news program can not be extrapolated to others, it can serve as a starting point for a broader study of television news bias on the issue of gays in the military.

Therefore, a content analysis of the "Nightline" programs dealing with the controversial issue of allowing openly gay and lesbian people to serve in the armed forces is proposed, to determine whether a biased view was presented by this ABC News program. Bias will be defined as an unbalanced presentation of the issue. Lack of bias will be determined by an equal (or near equal) number of statements in support of gays in the military and those against. Source bias will be determined by an equal (or near equal) number of participants identified as either pro or con on this issue. Participants on the programs will be representative of the populace as a whole. This analysis seeks to support the following hypotheses:

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[11] "Watchdog Group Gives Poor Marks to 'Nightline,' 'MacNeil/Lehrer,'" Broadcasting, 118 (May 28, 1990) p.68.

1. Based upon statements by both participants and reporters, "Nightline," presented a balanced coverage of the issue on lifting the ban on gays in the military.
2. The coverage presented provided a balance of all sources, both for and against the issue.
3. The programs contained a balanced number of gay and non-gay participants.
4. Both gay males and lesbians were equally represented.

To reiterate, the results of this analysis cannot be extrapolated beyond "Nightline," but can merely serve as a starting point for a broader analysis of other television news programs' presentations of this topic.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The literature can be divided into three main groups. These are: books and articles pertaining to news bias; articles about "Nightline;" and, articles concerning representation of gay issues by the media. An excellent example of articles pertaining to gays in the media can be found in the following quote:

> "The media's discussions of gay rights in the abstract ignore the personal dimensions of daily life impinged upon by anti-gay bigotry."[12]

The quote that:

> "...yes, plenty of anti-gay discrimination infects today's newsrooms."[13]

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[12] Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon, Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in News Media (Secaucus: Carol Publishing Group, 1990), p.238.

[13] ASNE Foundation, Alternatives: Gays & Lesbians in the Newsroom (New London: The Day Publishing Co., 1990) p. 5.

and another that states:

> "Today when we see exceptionally distorted media coverage of lesbian and gay issues, it's easy to feel like the situation is hopeless."[14]

make it easy to see how an issue dealing with gay rights can become distorted and biased in today's media. Further, it provides an impetus for studies of bias by media in their coverage of gay issues.

Other articles have dealt more specifically with media reporting of gay issues and gays in the military. Bruce E. Drushel, in an article about coverage of AIDS and homosexuals, states:

> "...that they have been sensationalistic and cynical, have blamed the AIDS victim for his or her own plight, and have overemphasized the role of the homosexual in the spread of the disease."[15]

Stanley E. Harris, states:

> "There is growing American concern that the Department of Defense exclusive policy on homosexuality is unsound, unfair, and unneccessary. Numerous military service veterans who have been discharged for homosexuality are challenging the policy in court, as yet without complete success."[16]

Articles about "Nightline," were mainly those dealing with the show's purported biased approach to news reporting by the media watchdog group, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting. The following:

> "'Nightline' anchor Ted Koppel said following

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[14] Lesbian and Gay Media Advocates, Talk Back! The Gay Person's Guide to Media Action, (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1982) p. 13.

[15] Bruce E. Drushel, "Sensationalism or Sensitivity: Use of Words in Stories on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) by Associated Press Videotext," Journal of Homosexuality 21 (1991):50.

[16] Stanley E. Harris, MD, "Military Policies Regarding Homosexual Behavior: An International Survey," Journal of Homosexuality 21 (1991):67-68.

> release of the first report, that critics are not needed since he asks 'tough questions' of policy makers who are invited on the program. He was also quoted as saying that if a liberal administration were in power, 'you'd suddenly see an enormous disparity (in the guest list) in the other direction."[17]

The various studies performed on media bias took several approaches in how they defined this abstract term and many forms bias can take. Steven E. Clayman did a study looking at how interviewers can portray bias and distortion in news by not remaining neutral, and also the methods they used to remain neutral and above the fracas.[18] In their article on news distortion, Paul H. Arntson and Craig R. Smith looked at how the organization of a television news operation can contribute to bias in reporting. They concluded that:

> "As information becomes more processed it is less likely to be in unfamiliar form, and hence, standardized rules can cope with it. At the same time, since it is altered from its raw from, it is more likely to be distorted the further it moves through the system."[19]

C. Richard Hofstetter and Terry F. Buss, in a study on bias, concluded that:

> "If bias is a factor in political reporting, then its far-reaching effects are those due to selectivity."[20]

Herbert Gans best sums up news bias when he states:

> "'Distortion' has become a loosely used equivalent for 'bias.' In the last ten years, the news has been considered distorted

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[17] Broadcasting, May 28, 1990, p.68.

[18] Steven E. Clayman, "Displaying Neutrality in Television News Interviews," Social Problems 35 (October 1988):474.

[19] Paul H. Arntson and Craig R. Smith, "News Distortion As A Function of Organizational Communication," Communication Monographs 45 (November 1978):378.

[20] C. Richard Hofstetter and Terry F. Buss, " Bias in Television News Coverage of Political Events: A Methodological Analysis," Journal of Broadcasting 22 (Fall 1978):528.

> because it favored one or another ideology, or was unfair to one or another set of public officials; because it was overly superficial, too concerned with personalities at the expense of issues, or overly given to dramatic action and exaggeration; because it was too preoccupied with official sources and with media events rather than with 'actualities;' or because it reported too much social disorder or other bad news."[21]

METHODOLOGY:

Transcripts were obtained from Journal Graphics, Inc. for the "Nightline" programs dealing with the issue of whether persons who are openly gays and lesbian should be allowed to serve in the military. Transcripts were used as an economic convenience. The transcripts analyzed were of programs which aired on the following dates: January 25, 1993; January 26, 1993; January 28, 1993; and, January 29, 1993. All of these programs were thirty minutes in length, except for the show that aired on January 28th, which was sixty minutes long. The titles of the programs, in order of the date they appeared are: "Controversy Over Lifting Ban on Gays in Military;" "Controversy Continues Over Gays and Military;" "Federal Court Says Anti-Gay Ban is Unconstitutional;" and, "Clinton Announces Plan On Gays in Military."

Each program was first analyzed according to the participants in the show. Each participant was coded using the variables of: gender; sexual orientation; military service; occupation; party affiliation (of government officials); organizational affiliation (of non-government officials); and, whether the participant was pro, con or neutral on the issue.

Gender was coded as being either male, female or undetermined. Due to the use of transcripts, determination of gender was made based on the use of pronouns within the content of the program, or by proper name, such as George for a man or Mary for a woman. If gender could not be determined it was coded as unknown.

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[21] Herbert J. Gans, Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time, (New York: Vintage Books, 1980): p. 304.

Sexual orientation was coded as either: straight (Heterosexual); gay (both homosexual males and females); bisexual; and unknown. In order to be coded as either straight, gay or bisexual, sexual orientation had to be explicitly stated somewhere within the context of the transcript. For example: Lt. Tracy Thorne, Gay Naval Officer. If sexual orientation was not stated it was coded as being unknown.

A participant was considered to have military service if they were either currently on active duty, a veteran or a retired member of the armed forces. As with sexual orientation, guests had to be identified as having served or currently serving in the military. For example: Lt. Col. William Gregory (Ret.), former JT Staff Strategic Planner.

For the variable of occupation, each participants' occupation was listed only if stated. Occupation of guests were obtained from the content of the transcripts during the host's introductions. Such identifications might be a person's title, such as senator, congressman or president. If no occupation could be determined, it was coded as being unknown.

Under party affiliation of government official, a person was coded as being either: Republican; Democrat; Independent or Unknown. The transcripts provided party affiliation for government officials by noting it, such as Senator Howell Heflin, (D), Alabama.

Participants who were not government officials, were coded according to the organization with which they were affiliated. An example is the Director of Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Each participant was coded according to whether they were: for lifting the current ban on having open gay men and lesbians serving in the military;

opposed to lifting the current ban; or were neutral, (expressing no opinion either way). A participant's view on the issue was determined from within the context of the transcripts. An example would be the following:

> "...by an officer who has researched the subject of gays in the armed forces and says the ban should remain in force, and we'll be joined by a Navy flyer who was a top gun until he announced on this program that he's gay."[22]

A second instrument was used to determine whether the statements spoken were either against lifting the ban; for lifting the ban; or, neutral, (no view expressed either way). For this research study, a statement was considered to be a complete thought spoken by a participant, whether they were a guest or a reporter. The transcripts indicated the beginning of each statement. This excerpt, for example:

> Lt. Thorne: No sir. AIDS-
> Lt. Col. Gregory: Since only-since only 30 percent of the AIDS victims are drug users, should we permit-
> Lt. Thorne: Sir.[23]

was coded as three separate statements. An example of a statement in favor of lifting the ban is:

> "...All we're trying to do is say, 'Look, we want to serve our country."[24]

An example of a statement opposed to lifting the ban is:

> "..the low rate of infection in the military result of excluding drug abusers and homosexuals (sic)."[25]

A neutral statement would be similar to the following:

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[22] ABC, "Nightline," 25 January 1993, "Controversy Over Lifting Ban on Gays in Military," Cokie Roberts.

[23] Ibid. p.7.

[24] Ibid. p.7.

[25] Ibid. p.8.

> "-on that word we will have to close. Thank you very much, ..."[26]

Due to the vagueness of some statements, it could not be ascertained whether they were pro, con or neutral. The intercoder reliability should, to some extent, statistically alleviate this problem.

After completion of the coding, totals were obtained for each of the various categories. An item's percentage of a category was obtained, (i.e. gender: males 65%, females 30% and unknown 5%).

RESULTS:

The total number of guests/participants on the "Nightline" programs for the four days from 25-29th of January, 1993 totaled 81. Of this amount three were female, 53 were male, and the gender of 25 could not be determined and was marked as unknown. Intercoder reliability for these items was 100%. A little more than 3% of the participants in these programs were classified as female. This may be the result of the large number of people whose gender could not be determined. Even if all of these 25 "unknown" participants were female, they would still account for only about 35% of the total participants. Since it is unlikely that all 25 of these people were female, this percentage would probably be less. Only a content analysis using the tapes of the actual programs would provide a true picture of gender breakdown.

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[26] Ibid. p.8.

TABLE 1: GENDER

MALE	FEMALE	UNDETERMINED	TOTAL
n = 53	n = 3	n = 25	n = 81
65%	4%	31%	100%
100%	100%	100%	INTERCODER REL.

In the category of sexual orientation, eight people were identified as gay; three as heterosexual; and the sexual orientation could not be ascertained for 70 people. The intercoder reliability for this variable was 100%. Out of the total of 81 people almost 10% were gay, but they were all male. No lesbians were identified in this sample, although they are present in the military. This reflects the preponderance of male participants in the programs. Although the sexual orientation of some of the participants in these programs could be surmised from past experience, (such as President Clinton), their sexual orientation was coded as undetermined because it was not explicitly stated they were heterosexual. This is the reason for the large number of people whose sexual orientation could not be determined.

Intercoder reliability for military personnel, either active duty, veteran or retired was only 68%. A difference which is unaccounted for. The average between the two coders of program participants who were military personnel was 18 people.

TABLE 2: SEXUAL ORIENTATION

HETEROSEXUAL	HOMOSEXUAL	UNDETERMINED	TOTAL
n = 3	n = 8	n = 70	n = 81
4%	10%	86%	100%
100%	100%	100%	INTERCODER REL.

Occupations of program participants fell into fifteen separate categories. These were: program host, retired, President, Senator, military, current members of the president's administration (Secretary of Defense, White House Chief of Communications), television news reporters, Congressmen, radio talk show hosts, factory workers, telephone operators, newspaper/magazine journalists, director of a non-government agency and law professor. The vast majority of the people fell into the occupation of Senator (16), followed by military personnel (11), television news reporters (10) and retired (7). All other occupations had four or fewer members.

Among the government officials who appeared on the programs, 16 could be identified from the transcripts as Democrats and 12 were Republicans. Political party affiliation of the other 53 program participants was not mentioned within the transcripts.

TABLE 3: POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION

DEMOCRAT	REPUBLICAN	UNDETERMINED	TOTAL
16	12	53	81
20%	15%	65%	100%

100%	100%	100%	INTERCODER REL.

Of those people who were identified through the transcripts as being affiliated with non-governmental agencies, eight were with ABC News, three were with the defense contractor Pratt & Whitney, and one was with each of the following: Mutual Radio, Georgetown University, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Service Academy Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association, The Washington Post, and U.S. News and World Report.

As to the stance of a participant, the intercoder reliability ranged from 100% for those against lifting the ban; to 94% for those with no opinion expressed either way; and, 90% for those for lifting the ban. These numbers are quite high for intercoder reliability. The percentages of those in support of lifting the ban was 24%; 33% were against lifting the ban; and, 43% were neutral in their viewpoint.

TABLE 4: VIEWPOINT (PRO, CON OR NEUTRAL)

PRO	CON	NEUTRAL	TOTAL
n = 19	n = 27	n = 35	n = 81
23%	33%	44%	100%
90%	100%	94%	INTERCODER REL.

The intercoder reliability for the analyzed statements was: 96% for those opposed to lifting the ban; 77% for those in support of lifting the ban against gay men and lesbians in the military; and, 98% for statements which were neutral. Intercoder reliability for statements that were neutral and those opposed was quite high, while it was only moderately high for those in support of lifting the ban. Based on percentages, 23% of the total statements supported lifting the ban, 24% opposed lifting the ban and 53% were neutral. The total number of statements recorded was 438.

TABLE 5: STATEMENTS

AGAINST THE BAN	FOR THE BAN	NEUTRAL	TOTAL
n = 105	n = 100	n = 233	n = 438
24%	23%	53%	100%
96%	77%	98%	INCOD.REL.

DISCUSSION:

Overall the content analysis of the "Nightline" programs pertaining to lifting the ban on gays and lesbians in the military obtained mixed results. Our first hypothesis was supported, as the number and percentage of statements for and against the issue were approximately equivalent. Based solely on the quantification of the statements and the explication of bias being defined as an unequal number of statements on both sides of the issue, "Nightline," was unbiased in it coverage of the issue. However, the content analysis of these programs consisted of other categories which did reflect a bias in "Nightline's" approach to this issue.

In the category of gender, only a very small number of females were represented. Even when taking into account the 25 people whose gender could not be determined, females would still be under-represented. A program which presents predominantly male participants fails in its effort to present a balanced view of the issues. A nonbiased presentation, being defined as one which is balanced in all aspects, would mean that "Nightline" was biased in its presentation of this issue when viewing the category of gender. This is not surprising and adds credence to the following statements:

> "Media commentators are overwhelmingly male. 'For all their activity now outside the home,' said Fairleigh Dickinson University's dean of graduate studies, Barbara Kellerman, 'women are by and large still excluded from the select group that constructs our national reality.' While women are becoming more visible as news reports, 'for a female to play the role of commentator, expert, or analyst-that is, to be the resident sage-is still disturbingly rare.' During presidential campaigns, for instance, 'television's stock experts' are 'almost invariably men.'"[27]

Possibly related to the dearth of females represented on this program, no lesbians, either in or out of the military, were identified.

In the category of sexual orientation it is interesting to note that 10% of the participants whose sexuality was identified were gay, and all were male. This is consistent with most estimates of this minority's presence in society. However, the vast number of participant's sexuality was not mentioned. This seems to allude to the fact that, the homophobia in mainstream society necessitates gay people wearing a banner signifying their sexuality, while most heterosexuals do not. One purpose behind the gay rights movement is assimilation into an ideal mainstream society, where there will be no need for self-identified labels. As Larry Gross states:

> "Sexual minorities differ in important ways from the 'traditional' racial and ethnic minorities; they are in an interesting sense, akin to political minorities (so-called radicals and 'fringe' groups). In both cases their members typically are self-identified at some point in their live, usually in adolescence or later, and they are not necessarily easily identifiable by others. These two groups also constitute by their very existence a presumed threat to the 'natural' (sexual and/or political) order of things, and thus they are inherently problematic and controversial

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[27] Lee and Solomon, Unreliable Sources, p. 230.

> for the mass media. These characteristics can be seen to affect the way members of such groups are depicted in the media (when they do appear), and also suggest ways to think about the effects of such depictions on the images held by society at large and by members of these minority groups."[28]

Initially, when considering the category of sexual orientation, it appears that "Nightline's" coverage of this issue was unbiased. However, in terms of bias being defined by balance, this is not the case. The sexual orientation of many of the participants was not identified. Other then gay males, sexual minorities were absent, (e.g., lesbians and bisexuals). The implication of this is that for the majority (heterosexuals), sexual orientation is not a label to be worn like a scarlet letter. This observation fails to support the fourth hypothesis (that both gay males and lesbians would be equally represented). However, since 10% of the participants were gay, and this is representative of the populace as a whole, the third hypothesis was supported, (that the programs contained a balanced number of gay and non-gay participants).

The category of political party affiliation, like the categories of gender and sexual orientation, was not balanced. Of the 28 people whose party affiliation was identified, 57% were Democrats and 42% were Republicans. This corresponds to Ted Koppel's reply to the criticisms raised concerning representativeness of guests on "Nightline" by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, when he stated:

> "...if a liberal administration were in power, 'you'd suddenly see an enormous disparity (in the guest list) in the other direction.''[29]

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[28] Larry Gross, Ph.D., "Out of the Mainstream: Sexual Minorities and the Mass Media," Journal of Homosexuality 21 (1991): 20.

[29] Broadcasting, May 28, 1990.

Koppel's assertion of balance shifting with the political winds, is contrasted by the comments of Larry Gross:

> "Those who benefit from the status quo present their position as the moderate center, balanced between equal and opposing 'extremes'--thus, the American news media's cult of 'objectivity,' achieved through a 'balance' which reflects an invisible, taken-for-granted ideology...In the United States the mass media grant legitimacy to positions a lot further to the right than to the left, which puts the 'objectively balanced' mainstream clearly to the right of center."[30]

The category of whether a participant was pro, con or neutral on the issue of gays in the military, reflects an unbalanced presentation. Of the 81 participants studied, 20 were coded as pro, 27 were coded as con, and 34 were coded as neutral on lifting the ban. These figures represent 25%, 33% and 42%, respectively, of the total sample. These results fail to support the second hypothesis, that the coverage presented provided a balance of all sources on both sides (pro and con) of the issue. This result is not surprising, based on the study by D. Charles Whitney, et al., which refers to a Herbert Gans study:

> "The latter suggests that the sources of news are likewise biased structurally. Official, especially governmental, sources predominate, and where unofficial noninstitutional sources are used, they are not in any sense reflective of the social distribution of the general population: 'unknowns' can come into the news only in a highly truncated set of circumstances."[31]

Based on the mixed results of this content analysis, (two hypotheses supported, two hypotheses not supported), it is difficult to make a judgment as to whether "Nightline" was biased in its coverage of this issue.

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[30] Larry Gross, Journal of Homosexuality, p. 25.

[31] D. Charles Whitney, et al., Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, p. 162.

It does appear from this data, that on this issue, "Nightline" was biased in sources. A balance of sources was reflected at only one point in the analysis. This was for the program that aired January 28th, which included a discussion of the issue between three gay military men and three straight military men.

The balance reflected in the statements (pro, con and neutral) made by the program participants would lead one to conclude that "Nightline" was not biased in its coverage of this issue. Indeed, based on only this observation, we conclude that "Nightline" was not biased. This is counterweighted by the observed source bias; the observed source bias serves to mitigate the lack of bias observed in statement balance.

A major problem with this study was that transcripts were used as an economic convenience. This resulted in large numbers of people being coded into undetermined categories. An analysis of videotapes of the actual programs would alleviate most of this problem. Additionally, the videotapes would provide for a more comprehensive analysis of the programs by allowing the researchers to more accurately assess both source and structural bias through coding of items such as non-verbal cues and camera angles. This type of approach would be consistent with that espoused by Echo E. Fields, concerning qualitative analysis of television news.[32]

A cross-sectional content analysis of news stories dealing with this issue, from various television news organizations during the period of January 25--29, would provide data which could be extrapolated to television news media. Specifically how bias relates to this and other issues of controversy.

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[32] Echo. E. Fields, "Qualitative Content Analysis of Television News: Systematic Techniques," Qualitative Sociology, 11 (Fall 1988): 183.

Clearly, further research demonstrating the media's effect on inducing social change is warranted. As David L. Altheide states:

> "In short, there is clear evidence that the news media do figure in social change, including challenging the legitimacy of key individuals and institutions."[23]

It is apparent from this study that television news bias based upon a definition of balance exists. Only more research into this area will determine the extent of its existence.

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[23] David L. Altheide, "Media Hegemony: A Failure of Perspective," Public Opinion Quarterly, 48: (1984): 483.

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NEWSPAPER COVERAGE
OF THE 1960
CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

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NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE 1960 CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

INTRODUCTION

In February 1960, four black college students went into a Woolworth's store in Greensboro, North Carolina, bought toothpaste and other items, and then sat down at the lunch counter and ordered coffee and pie. They were refused service and were still sitting at the lunch counter two hours later when the store closed. The Washington Post marked this as the beginning of the "passive resistance movement" by black youths that "swept through Southern cities and brought sympathetic picketing at variety stores by white students in both the North and the South" (April 10, 1960, E1). Early 1960 was a time of escalating protests against the legalized segregation that prevailed in the South.

Two months after the Greensboro sit-in, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1960. This legislation, like the Civil Rights Act of 1957, aimed primarily to secure voting rights for African-Americans. Debate on the act was heated and divided senators and representatives along regional lines. A "liberal" group sought to include a broad set of measures in the bill, while a "Southern" group sought to dilute the bill's provisions. Congressional Quarterly reported that a "moderate" civil rights group -- led by Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson of Texas, Senate Minority Leader Everett Dirksen of Illinois, House Speaker Sam Rayburn of Texas, and House Minority Leader Charles A. Halleck of Indiana -- controlled the outcome of the bill ("Civil Rights Legislation" 1960, 763).

Passage of the bill in the Senate came only after repeated filibusters by Southern senators. The Senate debate set what was then a twentieth-century time record with "nearly 400 hours of off-and-on talk and one 125-hour-around-the-clock stretch" (Washington Post, April 9, 1960, A1, A10). Yet, after all the debates and compromises, the provisions of the bill continued to divide politicians. The Senate passed the measure on a vote of seventy-one to eighteen. The eighteen "no" votes all came from Southern Democratic senators.[1] Yet Senator Jacob Javits of New York, who favored a stronger bill, called the legislation "a victory for the Old South" (Washington Post, April 9, 1960, A1,A10).

The media were a part of this early 1960 setting of expanding civil rights demonstrations and congressional response to them. Sociologist Martin Oppenheimer, among others, has noted the importance of news reports in spreading information about the sit-ins in 1960 (1989, 40). Many U.S. dailies also devoted extensive coverage to the congressional debates. This is a preliminary study exploring coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1960 in selected U.S. daily newspapers, both to see how the newspapers reported on the legislative debate and how the coverage fits into a broader framework of the civil rights movement and reaction to the movement. It examines newspaper coverage from April 1 through April 15, 1960, a time of extensive legislative action. The Senate passed the bill on April 8 and the House on April 21. Examining coverage over a longer period of time would offer a better picture of how newspapers reported on the 1960 legislation, but this initial look at the topic seeks to provide a basis for a more in-depth study.

The term civil rights movement, used extensively throughout this study, refers to collective actions occurring in the United States, from the 1950s through the 1960s, that were aimed at ending segregation and attaining civil rights for blacks. The movement was concerned with such civil rights as the right to vote, and the rights of equal access to employment, housing, and public services. Later in the movement, poverty and economic issues also became central concerns.

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[1] All senators from Virginia, Mississippi, Louisiana, North Carolina, Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina voted against the bill.

Framework for study

The media were a pervasive part of U.S. society in 1960, as they are today. The media help shape the public's perceptions about events and issues, but also are themselves shaped by the society of which they are a part. Newspaper coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1960 is of historical interest, but it also illustrates how journalists portrayed the ways in the which the government reacted to the civil rights movement. The legislation was not a part of the civil rights movement per se, but this bill and others passed during the 1960s reflected the political response to the movement. Studying the media's coverage of the legislative debate can shed light on broader questions about the relationship between the media and the civil rights movement.

In a 1990 article about what he perceived as a recent expansion of antagonism between blacks and the media, journalist William J. Drummond said the prevailing sentiment during the 1960s was that "black leaders and the news media were de facto allies in the fight against Jim Crow" (24). Drummond worked as a reporter in Louisville, Kentucky, during the 1960s. He said that in Louisville and other cities, the media contributed to the success of the local civil rights movement:

> By bringing the demonstrations to the front pages and onto the television screens, reporters and editors kept the pressure for reform on white leaders. By publicizing the civil rights movement, the media gave its leaders and its rank and file legitimacy within the black community as well as among whites (24).

But this symbiosis between the media and civil rights declined by the late 1960s when urban riots hit much of the country, Drummond said (26).

When faced with reporting about a social movement as complex as the civil rights movement was in 1960, how did the media decide what to cover and how to cover it? Numerous factors influenced their decisions.

First, the media are event-oriented. Journalists tend to report on one meeting, protest, or press conference and then move on to the next. This orientation contributed to the relationship that Drummond identified between the media and civil rights leaders in the early 1960s. Sit-ins, demonstrations, and congressional debates on civil rights legislation created ideal events for the media to cover. When journalists concentrate on covering single incidents, however, they often lose a broader perspective. In 1968, a national advisory commission criticized the media for failing to cover the "causes and consequences of civil disorders and the underlying problems of race relations" (Kerner Commission 1968, 363).

Professional expectations and norms also influence media coverage. In a book on the role of the media in forming racial attitudes in Britain, Paul Hartmann and Charles Husband (1974) wrote:

> Much of the journalist's professional judgment is acquired incidentally rather than through direct instruction. There are certain dictums that can be passed on verbally, but much of the judgment of the journalist is gained by "picking up" the criteria used by established journalists, and unconsciously absorbing the value system of his fellows (147).

Hartmann and Husband also noted that journalists interpret events through a "familiar framework" that defines what is newsworthy (1974, 155). These frameworks "may originate in the general culture, or they may originate in the news itself and pass from there into the culture. The situation is one of continuous interplay between events, cultural meanings, and news frameworks" (1974, 155). Events with conflict and controversy provide what Hartmann and Husband called the "essence of 'newsworthiness.' " While gathering news, reporters also typically consult so-called experts and informed sources on specific topics (1974, 158-159).

In analyzing the mass media's "making and unmaking" of the New Left, Todd Gitlin (1980) used the concept of media frames, which he defined as "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual" (7). In the later twentieth century, political movements depend on the media "in order to matter." To do so, however, Gitlin said, the group's statements and/or actions must conform to journalists' notions about what is newsworthy. The economic and political interests of news organizations influence the routines of journalism and what versions of reality the media portray (3-4).

In Gitlin's terminology, the media "divide movements into legitimate main acts and illegitimate sideshows" so that their coverage appears "natural" (1980, 6). While the media portray images of order, political movements are complex and changeable (1980, 11). The application of his concept of media frames to the newspaper coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1960 can demonstrate how journalists portrayed the legislative action, which was one manifestation of the political response to the civil rights movement. This study uses a combination of content analysis and frame analysis in an attempt to gain a broad perspective.

The next section of the paper provides a review of literature on media coverage of the civil rights movement and racial issues; the following section offers historical context from which to consider the 1960 civil rights legislation. The final portions of the paper present and discuss the results of the research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Little has been written about media coverage of the 1960 Civil Rights Act itself, but an examination of studies on media coverage of the broader civil rights movement provides an indication of the type of coverage that could be expected. In a paper presented at the 1993 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication convention, journalism professor David Sumner called scholarly studies of the media's coverage of the civil rights movement "sporadic and inconclusive" (3). Media coverage of racial issues attracted some academic attention prior to 1960, with at least three articles published in journals during the 1950s.

In a 1955 article, sociologists Leonard Broom and Shirley Reece analyzed coverage of the Trenton Six Case in black, communist, and general-circulation newspapers. The case involved six black men charged in the 1948 murder of a Trenton, New Jersey, furniture dealer and in the beating of the man's wife. Prosecutors claimed five had confessed to the crimes, but the five denied it during their trial. Initially, all six were found guilty of first-degree murder and sentenced to death. After retrials, four eventually were acquitted, one died in prison, and one had his prison sentence shortened (5-8). Broom and Reece found that political orientation and racial interest exerted some influence on how the newspapers covered the case (19).

Journalism professor Roy E. Carter, Jr., reported in 1957 on a study of desegregation-related content in North Carolina newspapers, as well as in other newspapers. He found that blacks and public schoolteachers rarely served as news sources, even though they were greatly affected by desegregation. When content was classified toward "direction" of views on integration, 27 percent of content was listed as pro-integration, 12 percent as pro-gradualism (a gradual approach to integration), 30 percent as pro-segregation, and 31 percent as neutral. Carter also found much more variation in editorial page attention to the desegregation issue than in news page attention (17-18).

In a 1958 article, sociologist Warren Breed examined newspaper coverage of the Emmett Till murder trial in Mississippi. Till, a fourteen-year-old black from Chicago, was killed in the town of Money, Mississippi, in August 1955. Two white men were acquitted in the murder by an all-white, all-male jury. The case gained national and international media attention. Breed examined coverage in eleven newspapers, including two black weeklies and dailies of various sizes and in various parts of the country (291-293). Most of the dailies used "objective" news coverage emphasizing facts; only one newspaper, a small Mississippi daily, was biased under Breed's criteria. He did find some differences in coverage between North and South: "Southern papers made little characterization of castelike race relations and did not personalize Negroes, while Northern papers did." Black newspapers in both the North and South emphasized the violence and injustice of the case (298).

Also during the 1950s, Grover Cleveland Hall, Jr., editor of the Montgomery Advertiser in Alabama, lashed out at the Northern media for writing about Southern racial problems but ignoring their own. In a paper presented at a 1993 convention, Ginny Whitehouse, a graduate student at the University of Missouri, investigated the accuracy of Hall's criticisms by examining the coverage of racial issues in the New York Times, the Chicago Tribune, the Detroit Free Press, the Richmond Times-Dispatch, the Atlanta Constitution, and the Montgomery Advertiser in 1955, 1956, and 1957 (1993, 2-26). She concluded that Hall's allegations "were true, in part. Northern newspapers in this study reported local racial problems as already having been solved." But she also found that the Advertiser and the Times-Dispatch tended to focus on violent racial conflict in the North and ignored more positive integration news in other regions (1993, 26).

As civil rights demonstrations and media coverage of them increased in the 1960s, the journalistic trade press began examining reporting about racial issues. Also, books were compiled from at least three conferences where journalists and academics reviewed the performance of the media.

The Columbia Journalism Review published two articles in the early 1960s criticizing the newspapers in Birmingham, Alabama, and Augusta, Georgia, for inadequate coverage of racial tensions in those cities (Boylan 1963; McMillan 1962). For example, James Boylan wrote that the two Birmingham dailies tried to insulate readers from "the national impact of the demonstrations" occurring in their city. The newspapers' failures to report in detail on the demonstrators' objectives seemed to stem, Boylan said, from the newspapers' general lack of contact with the black community, which made up 34 percent of the city's population (1963, 31-32). Writer George McMillan also accused the Augusta newspapers of not printing news about racial incidents: "The Augusta story is an astonishing case history of how a local newspaper monopoly can ignore the news it does not like for its own readers and, because of the way news is disseminated, keep it from readers everywhere" (1962, 39). At one point, two reporters for the Augusta papers wrote a story about black youths protesting at a white city playground. Their article was junked in favor of a four-sentence story that appeared on the obituary page. The two reporters were fired after they called the Associated Press and the Atlanta Constitution and dictated the original story to them (McMillan 1962, 39-40).

Another 1963 issue of Columbia Journalism Review contained two articles debating the pros and cons of media suppression of information about race relations. The media's self-imposed suppression reportedly aimed to lessen chances that extremists would become agitated and attempt to stop racial reforms under way ("A Case for News Suppression"; "An Editorial Rejoinder").

Race and the News Media (Fisher and Lowenstein 1967) provides the proceedings of a 1965 forum at the University of Missouri. The text of many of the speeches sheds light on the views of journalists at the time. The book The Black American and the Press

(Lyle 1968) presents material from a 1967 symposium at the University of California, Los Angeles. The media's coverage of the civil rights movement also was discussed at a May 1968 conference at the University of Chicago Center for Policy Study (Daly 1968). This conference was organized to discuss issues raised by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders.

In July 1967, President Lyndon Johnson had appointed the commission to study the nation's racial tensions. The group's 1968 report is commonly known as the Kerner Commission report after Otto Kerner, the governor of Illinois who headed the group. One chapter in the report deals with the role of the media in the civil disorders that hit the United States in 1967. The commission studied not only media coverage of the riots, but also the overall treatment "of the Negro ghettoes, community relations, racial attitudes, urban and rural poverty -- day by day and month by month and year by year" (Kerner Commission 1968, 363).

The commission's evaluations of the media coverage are extensive, but it summarized its findings with three conclusions:

> First, that despite incidents of sensationalism, inaccuracies, and distortions, newspapers, radio, and television, on the whole, made a real effort to give a balanced, factual account of the 1967 disorders. Second, despite this effort, the portrayal of the violence that occurred last summer failed to reflect accurately its scale and character. The overall effect was, we believe, an exaggeration of both mood and event. Third, and ultimately most important, we believe that the media have thus far failed to report adequately on the causes and consequences of civil disorders and the underlying problems of race relations (Kerner Commission 1968, 363).

A survey off 388 executives from magazines, newspapers, and radio and television stations in 1968 produced results similar to the Kerner Commission's report. The survey, sponsored by Columbia Journalism Review and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, showed news executives thought that coverage of and understanding of blacks were inadequate, but that the media were beginning to provide better communication between whites and blacks. Most also said the media demonstrated a lack of analysis and interpretation in the news about black affairs ("Journalism and the Kerner Report" 1968, 42).

Various books, many of them written in recent years, have looked at media coverage of racial issues. In The White Press and Black America (1986), journalism professor Carolyn Martindale presented the results of a study of the New York Times, the Chicago Tribune, the Atlanta Constitution, and the Boston Globe between 1950 and 1980 to determine whether they implemented any of the suggestions of the Kerner Commission (8-9). She found that coverage of blacks increased sharply during the 1960s because of civil rights activities. Martindale also found continued coverage of American blacks during the 1970s. The amount of coverage of problems facing blacks also rose from the 1950s through the 1960s and 1970s, Martindale found (79-109).

In Southern Liberal Journalists and the Issue of Race, 1920-1944, historian John T. Kneebone (1985) discussed how many Southern liberal journalists advocated vertical segregation -- efforts to improve the lives of blacks but within a system of segregation -- into the 1950s. After the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision outlawing segregation in public schools, the journalists took up the more appropriate label of "moderates," Kneebone said (216). Many of these journalists did not give up their support for the Jim Crow system and became caught between the forces of history. Kneebone wrote:

> With the rise of the civil rights protest movement, gradualism and moderation became anachronisms. . . . As blacks and the federal government -- the two forces that the journalists had relegated to the sidelines in the struggle for reform in the South -- dismantled the legal system of racial segregation, the Southern liberalism of the Jim Crow era, its doctrines undermined by events, finally faded away (225).

Historian Hugh David Graham (1967) studied the coverage of desegregation in Tennessee newspapers. Although the editorial views on desegregation varied from newspaper to newspaper, Graham found what he called an "essential moderation" that was "consistent with an historic pattern of progressivism and racial moderation" in the state (1967, 307). He said the Tennessee newspapers may have been less hostile to desegregation than other former Confederate states because of a combination of geographic, demographic, and economic factors. For one thing, Tennessee had a smaller black population than Southern states that defended segregation more strongly (1967, 308).

Justification for this study

These books and articles produced over the past forty years present a wide range of both academic and journalistic analyses of the media's coverage of racial issues and the civil rights movement. In general, they demonstrate some regional differences in coverage. In the early 1960s, the period under study here, the most vocal newspaper resistance to civil rights efforts emanated from the Deep South.[2] Sometimes this resistance came in the form of editorials opposing integration efforts; other times it came in refusals to adequately cover local civil rights demonstrations and the causes of the protests. Of course, not all Southern or Northern newspapers covered the civil rights movement uniformly, and generalizations oversimply the situation.

This preliminary study does not attempt to analyze regional differences in coverage on a systematic basis because of the small number of newspapers used; only one newspaper from the Deep South, the Alabama Journal from Montgomery, Alabama, was used. A more extensive study of newspapers' coverage of the 1960 Civil Rights Act should attempt to examine regional differences.

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[2] The Deep South consists of the states of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina.

The Kerner Commission's report about media coverage of the civil rights movement provides a critique that is applicable to this research project. Even though the commission issued the report in 1968, its critique of press performance likely held true in the early 1960s as well. Its findings about the lack of media attention to the causes and consequences of civil disorders seem particularly relevant. The commission's findings emphasize the event orientation of the media and suggest that journalists may have covered the political debates over the 1960 civil rights legislation without providing much context for their coverage. The media also are expected to use recurring frameworks in presenting information about the legislation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Segregation/civil rights movement

As Congress debated the 1960 Civil Rights Act, Southern blacks faced rigid segregation laws "that limited where they could go to school, eat, recreate, and much more. Only a minority of black Southerners enjoyed the right to vote and rarely were allowed to exercise it in cases that could affect policy" (Levy 1992, 5). While Northern and Western parts of the United States did not have segregation laws, blacks in these areas usually lived in segregated neighborhoods and often had limited job opportunities. Blacks outside the South usually could vote, but they rarely had enough political clout to threaten the white majority (Levy 1992, 5).

Social historian Manning Marable referred to the period from 1945 to 1990 as the Second Reconstruction for black Americans -- "a series of massive confrontations concerning the status of of the African-American and other national minorities . . . in the nation's economic, social, and political structures" (1991, 3). World War II helped set the stage for the modern civil rights movement, according to historian David Howard-Pitney (1990). The war, including the slaughter of millions of Jews in Germany, created "a strong new moral consensus against racism" (134). Jim Crow laws and Ku Klux Klan activities in the South also put the United States at a disadvantage in its competition with the Soviet Union to win the allegiance of newly independent nations in Africa and Asia after the war, Howard-Pitney wrote (135).

What he called the "immediate spark" for the civil rights movement was the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision in Brown v. Board of Education (347 U.S. 483) in which the court found segregation in public education to be unconstitutional (Howard-Pitney 1990, 135). The court did not, however, set a specific time frame for compliance with the ruling, and officials in much of the South vowed to resist integration. The Brown decision raised hopes among African-Americans, but their "impatience with the slow pace of actual change gave rise to a new militancy in their demands for civil rights" (Howard-Pitney 1990, 135-136).

Civil rights legislation

During the Reconstruction era after the Civil War, Congress enacted several civil rights laws to protect the rights of African-Americans, but during the 1870s and 1880s, the U.S. Supreme Court declared major portions of these laws unconstitutional. During the following decades, a Democratic Party dominated by Southerners, a reluctance by the federal government to interfere in the affairs of states, and "virulent white racism" prevented the passage of further federal civil rights legislation until 1957 (Belknap 1991b, v).

When Dwight Eisenhower became president in 1953, he initially opposed civil rights legislation. By late 1955, however, Attorney General Herbert Brownell, Jr., was pushing for enactment of legislation. The administration sent a bill to Congress in April 1956, but a modified version did not receive congressional approval until August 1957. The bill dealt primarily with voting rights, but it also established a temporary six-member Commission on Civil Rights to study the condition of civil rights in the nation, and elevated the Justice Department's Civil Rights Section to division status (Belknap 1991b, v; Bardolph 1970, 399). "In 1960 came a second installment of federal civil rights legislation, and again the act that emerged from a sharply divided Congress was a disappointment to the advocates of full justice for blacks" (Bardolph 1970, 403). The law aimed largely to fill loopholes in the 1957 legislation that had prevented blacks from gaining voting rights.

By the late 1950s, the growing civil rights movement and the increased number of blacks in such states as California, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania led politicians to place more emphasis on civil rights issues. Government professor Daniel M. Berman wrote that, in 1959, Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson of Texas was particularly aware that the Democratic Party could be hurt in the 1960 presidential election if Congress failed to pass civil rights legislation. Johnson knew that "[t]he major stumbling block to his own pursuit of the presidential nomination in 1960 was his identification with the South" (Berman 1966, 5). Democrats controlled both the House and Senate, but Southern Democrats rarely voted with the rest of the party on economic and social issues (Berman 1966, 7).

Early in 1959, President Eisenhower called for a seven-point civil rights program. His plan consisted of the following (Berman 1966, 8-9):

1. Making it a crime to interfere with a school desegregation order of a federal court.

2. Authorizing the government to provide free education for children of military personnel if the public schools they had attended were closed to avoid integration.

3. Reminding state and local governments of their obligation to move toward school desegregation and offering federal funds to pay part of the cost for eliminating segregated schools.

4. Requiring states to preserve voting and registration records for three years when they pertained to federal elections. (After the passage of the 1957 law, some voting registrars refused to make registration and voting records available for federal inspection and, at times, even destroyed records [Bardolph 1970, 403-404].)

5. Extending the Civil Rights Commission for two years.

6. Creating a permanent commission to combat job discrimination in companies with government contracts.

7. Establishing penalties for interstate flight to avoid prosecution for bombing a church or school.

Congress failed to pass civil rights legislation before adjourning for the year in September 1959, except that it did extend the Civil Rights Commission, which was slated to expire at the end of 1959 (Berman 1966, 39). Also in September 1959, the commission issued a 668-page report about its study of voting complaints in the South and discrimination in public education and housing throughout the country. One of the commission's recommendations was that the president appoint temporary federal registrars in counties from which he received nine or more complaints alleging voting discrimination. While the registrars would abide by state election laws, they also would ensure that blacks had opportunities to vote in federal elections (Berman 1966, 44-45).

The Civil Rights Commission's report and the sit-in movement loomed over Congress as it reconvened in early 1960. The final passage of the legislation by both houses in April 1960 came only have extended debates and strenuous opposition from

Southern senators and representatives. The final version of the bill contained some provisions similar to those initially proposed by Eisenhower. These included penalties for obstructing federal court orders concerning the integration of public schools; the requirement that voting records for federal elections be preserved for twenty-two months; the provision of schooling for the children of military personnel in areas where racial disputes had closed public schools; and penalties for bombing churches, schools, and other public structures. A key provision also called for the appointment of referees to assist blacks with voting registration in areas where patterns of discrimination existed.

METHOD

This study examines newspaper coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1960 from April 1 through April 15, 1960, a time of extensive legislative debate as the bill moved toward passage in both the House and Senate. Both news stories and editorials were studied in the Alabama Journal (Montgomery, Alabama), Chicago Tribune, Louisville Courier-Journal, Minneapolis Tribune, New York Times, San Francisco Chronicle, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and the Washington Post. These newspapers were selected to provide some geographic representation. (Tables providing information about the number of stories and editorials analyzed appear in Appendix A.)

Research questions

The following questions were posed to help analyze the newspapers' coverage of the civil rights legislation:

1. What editorial positions, if any, did the newspapers take on the Civil Rights Act of 1960?

2. What terms did the newspapers use to describe the various congressional groups participating in the debate over the act?

3. What sources did the newspapers use in their stories, and what "actors" were mentioned in the stories?

4. What media frames were used in the newspapers' coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1960?

Definition of terms

The Civil Rights Act of 1960 refers both to the final version of the legislation as passed by the House and Senate and to earlier versions of the legislation as it was debated in both houses in April 1960.

Editorial positions are expressions of opinion representing the views of the editors of the newspaper on a particular issue. The positions usually are expressed as editorials on a page designated for opinions.

Sources are people and organizations used by the newspapers in gathering information for their stories on the legislation.

Actors are people and organizations portrayed as having roles in the development of and action on the legislation.

Media frames, in Gitlin's definition, are "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual" (1980, 7).

FINDINGS

1. What editorial positions, if any, did the newspapers take on the act?

The editorials in the newspapers indicate the views of editors on the Civil Rights Act of 1960. Neither the Chicago Tribune nor the Louisville Courier-Journal[3] ran editorials on the topic during the period under study, but all other newspapers ran at least one. All the editorials analyzed were written before final passage of the bill by the House, which did not come until April 21.

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[3] On April 14, the Courier-Journal did carry an editorial that expressed its views on racial issues. The editorial compared the 1960 racial tensions in South Africa and in Birmingham, Alabama. Stories by Harrison Salisbury about conditions in Birmingham had appeared in the New York Times (April 12 and 13) and other newspapers that subscribed to the Times news service. While Alabama was not "shooting down masses of unarmed Negroes," as

Editors of the Minneapolis Tribune, New York Times, San Francisco Chronicle, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and Washington Post expressed some level of support for the bill, although some said the measure should have contained stronger provisions. The editors of the Alabama Journal vehemently opposed the bill; their views appeared to reflect the strong disapproval the measure received from most Southern senators and representatives.

The editors of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch seemed the most skeptical about the effectiveness of the 1960 legislation. The first editorial appearing in the newspaper disapproved of an amendment Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee tried to add to the bill. Editors thought the amendment would weaken the voting rights provisions. The amendment would have allowed local officials to attend hearings at which blacks discussed how their voting rights were abridged, and opponents said this would intimidate blacks. "Certainly the Kefaufer amendment would invite obstructionism in a procedure that already contains too many obstructions," editors wrote (April 1, 2E). Later, Post-Dispatch editors wrote that a Democratic Congress was producing "essentially Republican legislation." The editorial went on to say, "The lack of congressional courage displayed here is unfortunate but not destructive of civil rights." The editors conceded that the bill headed for passage in the Senate was probably the best possible at the time (April 7, 2B).

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was occurring in South Africa, Courier-Journal editors wrote that "Birmingham . . . is learning that laws designed to chain the black man inevitably hit the white man, too" (8).

While San Francisco Chronicle editors wrote that the Civil Rights Act of 1960 might be a "reasonably good bill," they did not think it was a cause for rejoicing:

> [H]ave we any business cheering and congratulating ourselves and the Senate for meeting an obligation [guaranteeing voting rights without regard to race] which was clearly and expressly undertaken in 1870 in the Fifteenth Amendment? Not even in the case of the Prohibition amendment has the Constitution been more studiously and sullenly defied (April 12, 26).

Editors of the Minneapolis Tribune, New York Times, and Washington Post viewed the legislation as moderate but useful. The Tribune called the voting rights provisions of the bill "a substantial stride forward in the field of civil rights justifying the many weeks of vigorous controversy that preceded passage of the bill [in the Senate]" (April 11, 4). A New York Times editorial said, "It isn't a bill that will cause any sudden revolution in voting patterns in the South, but it is a bill that does open the way to a greater Negro participation at the ballot box than ever before." The bill [soon to be passed by the Senate] is a "modest measure but not a valueless one," editors wrote. At the same time, the newspaper chided President Eisenhower over reports that he was "happy" about the bill. While the bill might be acceptable, editors said, it represented less than the administration proposed and less than it could have been if the president had been "willing to fight a little for it, or to express himself more vigorously on the moral questions of civil equality. While moderation on these issues is proper and necessary, avoidance of the issues can never solve them" (April 8, 30).

The first Washington Post editorial, appearing two days before final Senate passage of the bill, noted that the recent actions by senators indicated "votes were not at hand for enactment of stricter amendments or for inclusion in a single measure of all the legislation that liberal-minded legislators want." Both houses should concentrate on saving the "moderate, constructive, and reasonable provisions" of the bill in the form then being considered, editors wrote (April 6, A16). The Post took a stronger position against an amendment that was added to the Senate bill April 7. Editors said the amendment created confusion because no one seemed able to clarify what it meant (April 8, A14).

The Alabama Journal's five editorials left no doubt about the newspaper's opposition to the civil rights bill. An April 11 editorial called the Senate-passed version of the bill "another Reconstruction force bill" that would be enforced by federal marshals in the same way armed troops enforced Reconstruction legislation in the 1860s and 1870s. Editors suggested that the bill was not needed because Alabama had registered blacks to vote for years "as they became qualified."[4] The editorial continued:

> That the new law will permit Negroes universally to vote merely because they are Negroes is the law's worst feature. That it permits a federal judge to hold secret sessions with a Negro complainant and register him secretly as a voter is something even Tammany or a Chicago machine would regard with disfavor (4A).

Other Journal editorials referred to Senator Clifford Case of New Jersey as a "pygmy statesman" because of his "vicious" advocacy of a civil rights bill (April 8, 4A) and to Senator Estes Kefauver as a "chameleon" because he now was jumping on the "segregation bandwagon" -- by offering a civil rights amendment favorable to the South -- to get reelected. Voters in Tennessee, Alabama Journal editors wrote, should not forget that while serving in the U.S. House, Kefauver supported a federal anti-poll tax bill, federal anti-lynching laws, and the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education school desegregation decision (April 12, 4A). The only conciliatory language the editorials contained about the rights bill was that it might "speed the arrival of a two-party system in Alabama and states where Negro voting is inhibited." Black voters, along with younger white voters, would be more receptive to the Republican Party than most Southern voters were, editors wrote (April 10, 2B).[5] Since the days of Reconstruction by the Radical Republicans, the Democratic Party had dominated Southern politics to the point that Republicans had little support in many areas.

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[4] Congressional Quarterly estimated that in 1956, approximately 9.9 percent (53,244) of the potential number of black voters were registered to vote in Alabama ("Civil Rights Legislation" 1960, 767). The U.S. Civil Rights Commission reported that in 1960, 13.7 percent (66,009) of the potential number of "nonwhite" voters were registered in Alabama, compared with 63.6 percent (860,073) of potential white voters ("Civil Rights Commission Extended" 1961, 395). The Alabama Journal's editorial said more than 72,000 blacks were registered to vote in the state, presumably in 1960, although no specific date was listed (April 11, 4A).

2. What terms did the newspapers use to describe the various congressional groups participating in the debate over the act?[6]

News stories portrayed the civil rights groups in the Senate as divided into three camps. Those opposed to the act were referred to primarily by the region of the country from which they came -- "Southerners," the "Southern bloc," "the Southern side of the aisle," "Southern colleagues," the "Southern contingent," "Southern opponents," "Southern Democrats," the "Southern opposition," "Dixie forces," "Dixie members," and "hard-core representatives of the old Confederacy." This representation of those opposed to the bill was true of the Senate; only eighteen senators, all from Southern states, voted against the measure. In the House, however, the regional breakdown of those opposed to the bill was not as clear-cut. The act passed the House on a vote of 288 to 95 with 165 Democrats and 123 Republicans supporting it and 83 Democrats and 12 Republicans opposing it. Nine House members from the old South voted for the bill --

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[5] This editorial appeared in a Sunday newspaper in which the Alabama Journal and its sister newspaper, the Montgomery Advertiser, published a combined edition. While it is unknown whether editors of the Journal or Advertiser wrote this particular editorial, the Advertiser's editorials on civil rights issues generally expressed the same views as those in the Journal. (See for example the Advertiser, April 8, 1960, Page 4A, and April 17, 1960, Page 2B.)

[6] In answering this and the remainder of the research questions, the content of all the newspapers was considered jointly. The content was similar in all the newspapers with many of them carrying some of the same Associated Press and United Press International stories. The breakdown of how many staff-produced and wire service stories each newspaper carried appears in Appendix A, Table 2.

six Texas Democrats, one Florida Democrat, and two Tennessee Republicans (New York Times, April 22, 1960, 1,14).

Members of the Senate group pushing for stronger provisions than were contained in the Civil Rights Act of 1960 were referred to as "liberals," "the liberal bloc," "ardent civil rights supporters," "Democratic liberals," "hard-core civil rights supporters," "civil rights proponents" "urban-industrial state advocates of far-reaching legislation," "so-called liberal Northern senators," and "Northern so-called liberals of both parties." The "liberals" wanted to include additional measures in the civil rights bill such as federal enforcement of school desegregation and application of civil rights laws to areas besides voting (such as employment).

The third Senate group, which ultimately determined the fate of the 1960 bill, was known as the "moderates." A Washington Post reporter referred to these senators as the "middle-of-the-road majority in the saddle" (April 5, A1,A15), and a St. Louis Post-Dispatch reporter called them the "middle-of-the-road bipartisan majority" (April 5, 2A). A wire service story in the San Francisco Chronicle said the bill passed the Senate with "party leaders firmly in control [of] a combination of Northern Democrats and Republicans" (April 9, 1,6). A New York Times reporter referred to the winning Senate group as the majority that opposed "extreme positions" (April 10, 11E).

3. What sources did the newspapers use in their stories, and what "actors" were mentioned in the stories?

The vast majority of those used as news sources by the newspapers or mentioned as actors in the civil rights debate were national politicians -- members of the House and Senate and members of the Eisenhower administration. Occasionally, state-level politicians were mentioned. For example, all thirty of the sources and actors used one or more times in Minneapolis Tribune stories were politicians, thirty of the thirty-two sources and actors used one or more times in the Alabama Journal were politicians, and thirty-five of the thirty-seven sources and actors used one or more times by the New York Times were politicians. The numbers were similar for the other newspapers.

The coverage in all the newspapers included the views of few people or organizations besides politicians. An April 1 Washington Post story contained a paragraph expressing the opposition of Roy Wilkins, executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, to a proposed amendment to the rights bill. Wilkins sent telegrams to seventy-six senators, saying the amendment would make it "harder rather than easier for Negro citizens in the South to register and vote" (A2). April 9 stories in the Alabama Journal, Louisville Courier-Journal, and St. Louis Post-Dispatch all carried comments from Wilkins calling the bill passed by the Senate a "fraud" and a "wretched remnant of what was not very much at the outset" (Journal, 1A,8A; Courier Journal, 1,14; Post-Dispatch, 1A,9A). The information was based on a statement issued by Wilkins and apparently not the result of reporters seeking out his views.

The New York Times also carried a six-paragraph story about Thurgood Marshall's objections to the bill. Marshall, then director-counsel for the NAACP and later a U.S. Supreme Court justice, said the bill wasn't "worth the paper it's written on." In a speech at Haverford College in Pennsylvania, he said Congress acted "disgracefully" in handling the bill (April 13, 33). The Alabama Journal also ran a wire story about Charles Bloch, a Georgia lawyer frequently contacted by Southern senators to testify against civil rights legislation (April 2, 4B).

Two newspaper stories referred to how the civil rights legislation might influence black voters in the upcoming elections. A story by a Louisville Courier-Journal reporter said "denunciation of the legislation by Negro leaders" could hurt

Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson's chances at a presidential bid (April 3, 1,28). A New York Times story said political implications of the bill might not be known until "civil rights activists and Negro voters in the heavily populated areas of the North and West" responded to the measure in the November election. Both were references to the impact of legislation on the 1960 elections, rather than discussions about what blacks thought of the bill (April 10, 2E).

4. What media frames were used in the newspapers' coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1960?

In the broadest sense, the newspapers framed the Senate's debate on the bill as a contest, a competition among political factions. Much of the content dealt with action on amendments proposed by the various groups, the responses of other groups to those amendments, and discussion of what would happen to the Senate bill when it returned to the House. This type of content, plus descriptions of the bill's contents, dominated the newspaper coverage.

Various images used for the newspapers conveyed the idea of a contest. For example, the Washington Post referred to the "marathon battle that has dominated the election-year session" and "eight weeks of stubborn debate" (April 10, A14). Another Post story said congressional Democrats were prepared to "call it a ball game . . . on the two-month-old civil rights fracas" (April 12, A1,A15). A Louisville Courier-Journal reporter wrote, "For eight weeks the Senate has been doing little but wrangling over civil rights. Yet, there has been no real letting of blood" (April 3, 1,28). A New York Times reporter described how the "Senate systematically beat down last-ditch amendments to the civil rights bill" and wrote that "[t]oday's action was only the scattered gunfire of disengagement after the battle" (April 7, 1A,23A).

Some reporters also portrayed the civil rights debate as a play. A Washington Post reporter referred to a House committee meeting that "appeared to book a relatively subdued final act in the once melodramatic civil rights debate" (April 12, A1,A15). Another Post story reported: "The final act in the once electric civil rights performance was played out undramatically before half-filled Senate galleries, with senators outspokenly impatient to go home" (April 9, A1,A10). A Louisville Courier-Journal reporter wrote that "[p]roducers of the civil rights performance in the Senate had their followers sticking closely to the script." The "production" went almost too smoothly, so Senate leaders had to apply the brakes to make the process follow "the way the script was written" (April 6, 2).

Related to the constant framing of the Senate debate as a political contest was newspaper content about the impact the legislation would have on the 1960 elections -- the ultimate political contest. In particular, reporters included discussions about whether the bill would help or hinder the presidential bid of Lyndon Johnson, Senate majority leader who helped push through the "moderate" legislation. The New York Times devoted an entire story to discussing how Southerners and those wanting a stronger rights bill would respond to Johnson's candidacy for the Democratic nomination for president (April 10, 11E). An Associated Press story in the Minneapolis Tribune reported that Johnson's work in guiding the legislation through the Senate was expected to "benefit" his presidential campaign (April 9, 1,5).

Other newspaper reports described the actions of Senator Allen Ellender of Louisiana to pacify voters back home. At one point in the Senate debate, Ellender filibustered for more than seven hours one day and three hours the next "in response to criticism originating in his state that he had 'faltered' in his opposition to civil rights legislation" (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, April 7, 2A). A Chicago Tribune reporter wrote that Ellender's "feelings had been hurt . . . when Southern newspapers showered acclaim" on Louisiana's other senator, Russell Long, who made an eight-hour speech against the rights legislation (April 6,1,2).

In framing the Senate debate on the civil rights legislation, the newspapers also often used historical references, particularly to the Civil War period, and appeals to constitutional and moral principles. Use of these devices usually came in quotations from politicians trying to emphasize why their positions should prevail. While such references may make appealing news copy, from a journalistic standpoint, they can oversimplify the issues. A few examples are:

- Senator Joseph Clark of Pennsylvania after passage of the Senate bill: "We of the North have suffered defeat. In this battle, the roles of Grant and Lee at Appomattox have been reversed" (Chicago Tribune, April 9, 1,5). Earlier, he had called the bill the "greatest Southern victory since the first and second battles of Manasses" (Louisville Courier-Journal, April 6, 2).

- Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas: The bill "constitutes an indictment of forty million citizens," and "The North has arrogated to itself the supervision of human relations in the South" (St. Louis Post Dispatch, April 8, 1A,4A).

- Senator Lyndon Johnson of Texas: The bill passed by the Senate was "a step we had to take and which we can greet proudly as evidence that America is moving toward the time when all men, regardless of their race, creed or color, will be treated equally by the laws," and the bill "seeks to right wrongs without punishing anyone for the alleged sins of their grandfathers" (Washington Post, April 10, A14).

- Senator Sam Ervin, Jr., of North Carolina: The bill unconstitutionally conferred on the federal government "the power to pass on the qualifications of those who are to be allowed to vote in state elections" (Alabama Journal, April 6, 1A,2A).

DISCUSSION

In summary, editorials in the Minneapolis Tribune, New York Times, San Francisco Chronicle, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and Washington Post expressed some level of support for the Civil Rights Act of 1960; the editors of the Alabama Journalopposed the legislation. News stories portrayed the civil rights groups in the Senate as divided into three camps -- the "Southerners," the "moderates," and the "liberals." The study also found that the vast majority of people used as news sources by the newspapers or mentioned as actors in the civil rights debate were national, and occasionally state, politicians. Finally, the newspapers framed the Senate's debate on the bill as a contest, a competition among political factions. Related to this were frames about the impact the legislation would have on the 1960 elections, historical references, and appeals to constitutional and moral principles.

The failure of any of the newspapers to use more nonpoliticians as sources and actors raises the question of "Why?" General conclusions about sources and actors cannot be drawn from coverage in only eight newspapers over a fifteen-day period. The civil rights legislation was under review for weeks, and news stories during earlier stages of debate may have included more nonpolitical sources and actors. In addition, newspapers in the 1960s typically carried fewer analysis pieces that discussed the impact of legislation and the public's views on the legislation, than newspapers carry in the 1990s. Still, the overwhelming use of political sources and actors demonstrates the heavy press reliance on official sources and on covering events, rather than the impact of those events. This seems to follow the criticisms of the Kerner Commission that journalistic coverage of the nation's 1967 civil disorders did not devote enough attention to the underlying problems of race relations and the reasons for the violence.

The frames used by the newspapers tended to overemphasize the political contest aspects of the Civil Rights Act of 1960 and ignore the reasons the legislation was under review. The civil rights movement itself, the impediments blacks faced in trying to vote, and the legalized system of segregation in the South received little attention in the news stories. The Senate debate on the legislation was obviously a part of the political system, and news coverage about the bill as it moved through the Senate and House could be expected. But the coverage of the political debate, at least during the period studied, failed to root the legislation in the social conditions that led to its consideration.

The U.S. House and Senate in 1960 were made up almost exclusively of white males. By framing the civil rights debate as a political contest, the newspapers portrayed it as a competition between white government officials. Whites became both the supporters and opponents of civil rights for blacks. With the exception of a few comments from NAACP officials, readers were not told what blacks thought about the measure. In addition, the discussion about what impact the bill would have on blacks was limited and superficial. Yet, proponents of the legislation were supposedly acting on behalf of African-Americans. While the newspapers included in this study carried other news about civil rights demonstrations from April 1-15, 1960, they exerted little effort to connect the coverage of the legislation to other events and conditions in society.

The results of this study cannot be generalized beyond the newspapers and time period studied. Future research could examine coverage over additional periods of time and in more newspapers, including nonmainstream newspapers, particularly the black press. Also, additional frame analysis could be done to gain a fuller understanding of the newspapers' coverage. This research does, however, provide some preliminary observations about how newspapers covered the Civil Rights Act of 1960.

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APPENDIX A

Table 1
Newspaper coverage of Civil Rights Act of 1960 -- April 1 through 15, 1960

	Total number news stories	Total number editorials	Total number para. in stories	Mean number para. per story	Total number para. in editorials	Mean number para. per editorial	Number stories start Page 1
Alabama Journal	15	5	211	14.1	36	7.2	12
Chicago Tribune	8	0	116	14.5	0	0	4
Louisville Courier-Journal	11	0	208	18.9	0	0	5
Minneapolis Tribune	10	1	153	15.3	9	9	1
New York Times	16	1	308	19.3	3	3	9
San Francisco Chronicle	6	1	50	8.3	4	4	1
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	10	2	185	18.5	14	7	3
Washington Post	13	3	262	20.2	13	4.3	8

Table 2
Producers of news stories on Civil Rights Act of 1960
that appeared in newspapers April 1 through 15, 1960

	Newspaper staff-produced stories	Associated Press or United Press International	News services besides AP or UPI
Alabama Journal	0	15	0
Chicago Tribune	7	1	0
Louisville Courier-Journal	4	5	2
Minneapolis Tribune	1	6	3
New York Times	16	0	0
San Francisco Chronicle	0	6	0
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	4	6	0
Washington Post	9	4	0

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Voters' use of schemata in processing political information from the media:
The 1992 presidential election

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Abstract

Voters' use of schemata in processing political information from the media:
The 1992 presidential election

This panel study examined the operating schemata of voters regarding the political process and the media in the 1992 presidential election in determining whether to vote. The study confirmed Graber's six schemata for processing political news. New findings were the operating norm that nonnews media do not have to be objective in covering political news, the alteration of the person judgment schema of the draft avoider, and the occurrence of "echo" news.

Voters' use of schemata in processing political information from the media:

The 1992 presidential election

No voter comes to a campaign with a clean slate, ready to be written upon by the media and the candidates' messages. Rather, voting results from predispositions to voting and political behavior.

Nor does any voter leave a campaign with a clean slate. Each campaign leaves memories of broken promises, failed gimmicks, and weakened wishes. Yet, the cliche "hope springs eternal" appears to be applicable for each presidential campaign. Voters began the 1992 campaign ready to gather information and process it to make new judgments.

The purpose of this exploratory panel study of 22 registered voters was to understand the operating schemata of voters regarding the political process and the media in the 1992 presidential election in determining whether to vote. Because the 1992 presidential election with three strong candidates was unusual in recent election history, processing of mediated information may have been different than previous or subsequent elections. Respondents took part in three in-depth interviews and completed a one-week media-use diary. This study examined participants' reactions to general types of political stories that voters seek out or reject and also examined recall of specific election stories, specifically using Graber's schemata for political information processing (Graber, 1988). In addition to confirming Graber's six schemata, this study suggests three major conclusions: a new operating norm exists about the objectivity of the media as a political institution, a "person judgment schema" can be altered in a political campaign as seen in the change that draft avoiders can be patriotic and elected president, and the concept of "echo" news negatively shapes political communication.

Importance of study

This study was designed to be exploratory because qualitative research can be used to discover new theories that may be confirmed in followup research. Yet, even in exploratory social research there are some method conventions to follow such as random selection of a representative sample and use of a control group. Those conventions are discussed in the "Method and procedure" section.

Although this study focused on a small group of voters in a Midwest university city and thus generalization to the general population is unwarranted, the open-ended interview and media diary allowed the participants to define their universe or their political culture about political decisions in their own language. Open-ended responses are important data for analysis even though this type of political communication research gives up a certain amount of reliability as a tradeoff for coding more subtle and theoretically interesting features of media messages (McCleod et al., 1988). Panels can be more helpful than surveys and polls because panels are better suited to measuring how voters' intentions change over time (Graber, 1987). With a panel design based on open-ended interviews, the researcher can examine how participants are thinking — political cognition — and how they are acting in their political culture. Interviews have the advantage over survey research in allowing participants to pursue their own trains of thought, thus allowing the researcher access to the development of the thought process.

Much of traditional voter research depended on survey research from the Michigan studies and determining which party received the final vote. This study, however, did not concentrate on the final candidate vote as much as the processing used to make a decision to vote. With the weakening of the political party as a voter/candidate link (Wattenberg, 1990), political communication research must change with new uses of the media and technology and attempt to place findings within the context of specific elections. This study's discovery of a new operating norm of the objectivity of the media as an institution is an important part of this new research because the new norm may indeed reflect a needed change for the media in the 1996 election if they are to retain their supposed impartiality. Also, this study is important to political communication literature because mediated information showed trends that will shape future election communication, possibly even the shape of democracy itself, because campaign organizations used new forms of political communication such as townhall meetings, MTV appearances, and "talk-show" appearances in the selling of candidates.

Although the evidence used to support conclusions in this study appears merely anecdotal, the qualitative research is important because it pursues issues more in-depth for a smaller group of respondents and can be further tested in larger studies or quantitative research.

Research questions

This study asked the following research questions: 1) what are the thought processes engaged in when people select, retain, and ultimately process some form of mediated information about political involvement? and 2) how does an audience use the media to solve the problem of whether to vote?

Theoretical background

Both political communication and cognitive psychology research was relevant to this study. This study assumed that using political information not only was part of the voting process because participants were registered voters but also because America's political culture or "democratic wish" assumes direct participation (Morone, 1990). The media are so deeply embedded in the political system that without them contemporary political activity could not succeed (Seymour-Ure, 1974).

In traditional voter research, the act of voting was viewed as a sequential, two-step process (Milbrath, 1981; Campbell, Miller, and Stokes, 1960). The two-step voting choice theory was countered by the theory of voting as a simultaneous act of choosing to vote and choosing among candidates (Fishbein, Middlestadt, and Chung, 1985). Media effects on the intention to vote can be both direct and indirect through their influences on cognitions or understanding of issues (Kennamer, 1987).

Mass communication research on how political ideas move from the media to the public began with the "two-step flow" theory asserting that political ideas flow from media to opinion leaders and then to less active sections of the population (Lowery and DeFleur, 1988). The passive audience theory is now countered with more active audience theories such as the uses and gratifications model contending that audience members make conscious and motivated choices among channels and content (McQuail, 1987). The media's role — as agreed by both boosters and critics of the mass media — is as a central political educator (Neuman, 1986). Opportunities for political learning in a campaign are lessened to the extent that selective exposure occurs, with individuals seeking information that conforms to their values and avoiding information that does not (Patterson, 1980).

Change in political awareness can happen when the media reach large audiences and meet the five conditions of exposure to the media, comprehension, relevance to evaluation of politics, discrepancy with past beliefs, and credibility (Page, Shapiro, and Dempsey, 1987). Five factors may determine whether an issue actually influences election outcomes: the issue must be salient to an individual elector; the issue must be linked to the party; a sufficient number of voters must identify the issue as important; the issue must work disproportionately in favor of one party; the issue must be able to account for changes in support between the parties from one election to the next (Elliott, 1989). Timing of a political decision or whether a voter is an "early decider," "during-campaign decider," "late decider," or "last-minute decider" also affects awareness of issues (Goldman, 1988).

Agenda-setting theory suggests that there is a strong relationship between the emphasis placed on different campaign issues by the media and voter judgments as to the salience and importance of various campaign topics although later studies conclude that the precise ranking of issues by the media will not be matched by individuals (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; McCombs, Einsiedel and Weaver, 1991). The psychological process called *priming* shows that when the media emphasize particular issues, this emphasis confers status or increases salience. Then people's memories are activated on information about these issues, and voters use that information to form opinions about persons, groups, or institutions linked to those issues (Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder, 1982). Learning about other people's opinions in an election could have a negative effect on voting intention. Although there is a sizable association between the perceived climate opinion and expressions of voting intention, those perceptions may not lead to changes in voting (Glynn and McLeod, 1982). Later research contradicts the idea that media influence is significant only in shaping agendas. The interaction between media messages and what audiences make of them is called the "interdependence model" (Entman, 1989).

Researchers continue to argue which medium does a better job of providing political communication. Agenda-setting newspaper reading may be more important than television viewing in creating audience agreement of general themes of news coverage, with newspaper influence lasting about two months in comparison to television's role for one month (Carey, 1976). Newspapers are viewed traditionally as superior agents of information in helping people identify assets and liabilities of important political contenders (Clarke and Fredin, 1978). The more voters read political articles in newspapers, the more they watch local television news with the amount of local television news viewing having little, if any, effect on the frequency with which they read political articles (Choi and Becker, 1987). The belief that television is indeed the main source of information for citizens may not be accurate because television stories are transitory, cannot be reread, and the learning of content must occur quickly (Robinson and Levy, 1986). Newspaper attention has more impact than television attention on cognition, but television attention has more direct impact on the intent to vote (Kennamer, 1987).

Specific tools used in exposure of issues and opinion formation prior to 1992 included television debates, television ads, and polls. Televised debates did lead to political learning in a study of 1988 presidential debates (Drew and Weaver, 1991). Ads legitimize political institutions by affirming that change is possible, that presidents do make a difference, and that a voter can make a difference (Jamieson, 1992b). However, ads can set the agenda negatively because the ads' images can be more effective than other forms of political communication coming from parties or endorsements of trusted persons and organizations (Jamieson, 1992a). Negative ads can provide more information on issues than positive ads (Kaid and Johnston, 1991). Voter turnout may have been affected by poll stories in the 1988 election with a possibility that people were influenced not to vote by the broadcast and printing of preelection polls' prediction of a Bush victory (Lavrakas, Holley, and Miller, 1991).

Cognitive psychologists theorize that schemata organize people's thinking — their substantive beliefs, attitudes, values and preferences along with rules for linking different ideas. A social schema is "a cognitive structure that represents knowledge about a concept or type of stimulus, including its attributes and the relationships among the attributes" (Fiske and Taylor, 1991, p. 98). Storied information is abstract, but the concepts or schemata guide how people take in, remember, and make inferences about raw data. New information is assimilated with existing knowledge. Thus, prior knowledge shapes what is perceived and recorded in memory. First, a reader or viewer assesses the media report for salience (Entman, 1989). Then, if the message is salient, the person processes the news according to routines in the schema system, screening out contradictory information to current views. At other times the person may find the disturbing reports relevant. However, the *perseverance effect* suggests that schemata often persist stubbornly despite contrary evidence and that people may interpret the exception as proving the schema (Fiske and Taylor, 1991).

Social cognition is pragmatic, meaning that "people make meaning and think about each other in the service of interaction" (Fiske, 1992, p. 878). The interactions depend on goals, which depend on roles and the larger culture.

Various schemata models exist. For example, one model suggests categories of person schemata, self-schemata, event schemata, and content-free schemata (Fiske and Taylor, 1991, pp. 118-120).

Graber suggests six specific schemata strategies in processing political information (Graber, 1988, p. 193). The schemata are simple situation sequences, cause-effect sequences, person judgments, institution judgments, national interest and cultural norm applications, and human empathy perspectives. (An explanation of these schemata appears in the "Analysis" section.) According to Graber, voters do not usually incorporate the complexity of many political issues into their cognitive structures, but they calculate the cost of processing the news in terms of time and effort. This saving and simplifying approach is very similar to Downs' theory on democracy that rational citizens reduce their political data costs by reducing the quantity of received information (Downs, 1957).

Another information processing theory is the piecemeal process in which voters individualize or particularize the person, event, or issue instead of treating it as an example of a familiar category (Fiske, 1986). Piecemeal processing is used when the judged object is category inconsistent or does not cue a category, the judgment is not hurried, the respondent's outcomes depend on the judgment, or the respondent has a complex view of the judged object, while schema-based processing is likely when judgment is rushed, the respondent's outcomes do not depend on the judgment, or the respondent has a simple view of the judged object.

Voters will process information on certain issues differently than other issues (Perloff, 1985). Not only are voters concerned because of self-interest or beliefs that issues will affect their own economic or physical well-being, but also voters are concerned with issues because of ideology or political predispositions, global issue concerns, or values. Certain political issues such as personal unemployment affect voters' material well-being, and other issues such as foreign affairs and social services are relevant to citizens for ideological reasons. However, the voter would be more likely to search for relevant information if personally unemployed than if just interested in the general economy. This search for information helps explain why voters tend to "pick and choose" which information to process, suggesting that selection may not be haphazard.

Method and procedure

This study utilized a seven-week panel design of 22 registered voters and a control group of 10 from Boone County in Missouri during the period after Labor Day and immediately after Election Day 1992. From a printout of 65,000 registered voters, 200 random numbers (chosen with the Minitab program) were matched to the voter list. Out of the original 200 names, the researcher made approximately 120 calls to narrow the list of possible participants, attempting to match the demographics of the county in addition to a representative sample of economic status, occupations, and voting patterns in a presidential election. Twenty-five participants began the study, and 22 completed all three interviews.

Control group members were chosen from the random number list and only participated in the post-election interview. These participants were not called until the weekend before the election to lessen the effects of contamination. In quantitative research the usual purpose of control groups is to serve as a basis of comparison in an experiment because the control subjects have not received experimental treatment (Wimmer and Dominick, 1987). In this qualitative study, the researcher used the control group as a check whether the control group was similar to the main group in political interest, understanding of issues, use of media, and processing of political information and found that indeed the control group was similar to the main group in those areas. Thus, the main participants' high level of attention to the campaign probably was due more to the high visibility of the campaign rather than participation in the study.

Respondents were asked both open-ended and specific questions about media coverage, intention to vote, political viewpoints, and current issues. Each tape-recorded interview lasted approximately an hour to an hour and a half. The transcribed script was used for analysis of schemata.

Respondents' political interest varied although it could be termed unusually high due to the well-bankrolled third candidate and extraordinary media coverage through new outlets. Of the 22 participants, eight said they were Republicans, six said they were Democrats, and eight said they were Independents. Follow-up questions determined that three of the Independents leaned to the Republicans, four to the Democrats, and one was classified as a true Independent.[1] Seven of the participants voted for Bush, 11 voted for Clinton, and three voted for Perot. One — a Perot supporter — did not vote because of inclement weather and an injury. These percentages — 50 percent for

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[1] See Bruce E. Keith and others, The Myth of the Independent Voter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). These scholars suggest that voters who label themselves "independent" need to be asked follow-up questions to determine to which party they lean and if they are true independents. This follow-up question is not asked in many election polls.

Clinton, 32 percent for Bush, and 18 percent for Perot — were fairly close to the national popular vote of 43 percent for Clinton, 38 percent for Bush, and 19 percent for Perot.

Interview one focused on the participant's views on government and opinions on the democratic process along with specific political story recall questions. Second and third interview questions centered on political events of the previous week and media use. The interview transcript analysis involved five steps. First, the researcher read the transcripts for each set of interviews to get an overview of responses. This initial reading gave some direction on examining the responses for the six schemata of political information processing. Second, each respondent's answer was read for each question either by reading the original transcript or combining all the answers from one question or series of questions in a separate computer file. Third, the researcher repeatedly read the answers for one specific question several times, making notes about recurring words, themes, or messages. Answers that appeared to use similar themes were categorized together. Then the answers were reread for political news processing schemata, and notations were made of which schema or schemata were used to process the answers.

One way to test schemata is to mention certain traits or individuals or situations to participants and then ask them to categorize or supply additional details or to provide story scenarios (Graber, 1988). Thus, participants were asked questions such as "What would you tell a friend who has been out of the country for a long time about the candidacy of George Bush?" Also, participants were asked to give their feelings about various subjects such as local and national government, unions, politics, buying American products, etc. From these open-ended questions and responses to specific election and nonelection stories, mental pictures and information-processing schemata were shown.

In the one week media-use diaries, participants noted national election news articles or stories in the newspaper or television, entertainment shows seen with candidates or about politics, campaign ads, and conversations with anyone about the campaign in addition to noting their reactions. The diary — although brief and cryptic — allowed the researcher to understand the participant's view of the media and see patterns in usage not noted in interviews.

In the analysis, fictitious first names are used to protect respondents' privacy.

Analysis

In this analysis, a first section addresses the research question of people's thought processes when selecting, retaining and processing mediated information about political involvement. If a participant in this study showed a specific political information processing schema, it does not, however, mean that that schema operated throughout the campaign. Nor does it explain how the participant arrived at that schemata. For example, Darrell's assessment of why Clinton was not being seen with Jesse Jackson in the first section appears to be complex causal linkage or looking for hidden reasons as defined by Graber. What is unclear is whether Darrell himself was looking for a hidden reason and had come up with this idea on his own or whether the media had planted the story in his mind. He may have seen or read this analysis but didn't remember the source.

The second part of the analysis section examines the research question of how audience members use the media to solve the problem of whether to vote. Voters use political information for candidate selection. In the simultaneous voting model, voters consider alternatives simultaneously as opposed to the two-step model of first deciding to vote and then deciding on which candidate. With the simultaneous model, voters must understand the issues and candidates in that particular campaign and feel that a candidate is worthy of their votes before deciding to vote. Part of sorting out that worthiness is gathering and processing information that could affect whether voters feel a candidate is worthy of their vote.

In addition to background questions about media habits and political beliefs, participants were asked if there were any political stories that they especially liked to read or watch and if there were some in which they had no interest. They also were asked about specific election stories — what they remembered and learned, where they first heard about the story, vivid recollections, etc. In addition, they answered questions about candidates' stands on issues — specifically health care and the deficit — who the polls said were ahead, and the debates. Participants also were asked questions about voting habits and media sources.

1) What are people's thought processes when voters select, retain, and ultimately process some form of mediated information?

Graber's political information processing schemata are: 1) simple sequence or simple retelling of the story, 2) cause and effect sequence, which can include a simple causal linkage, a projection to the future, or a complex causal linkage looking for hidden reasons, 3) person judgments, which make people recognizable as members of distinct demographic, political, or ethnic groups, 4) institution judgments of institutional activities and behavioral norms of the political institutions such as fairness (this study includes the media as a political institution), 5) cultural norms and American interests, which includes ideas on the political culture, such as concepts of citizenship, needs of poor, etc., and 6) human interest and empathy, which answers whether a story touched the voters personally (Graber, 1988, p. 193).

Simple-situation schema

A simple-situation schema or retelling of the story rarely was used by participants. Even participants for whom this was their first presidential election seldom told a political story without commenting on the political aspect of it. Although it was the first-time voters' first presidential election, they brought their families' perceptions and predispositions about politics with them. When Melanie, a white 21-year-old college student, said that absentee ballots "were a pain in the butt," she admitted that she had never personally used them, but was passing judgment based on experiences of others. She did not, however, vote for the same candidates as her parents because as a young student she processed some political information in different ways.

Cause and effect schema

The cause and effect sequence schema was used often by participants. However, it was difficult to determine how much complex causal linkages responses were primed by media stories. Although a participant might suggest a complex, hidden meaning about a political story, followup questioning showed that the meanings may have been garnered from media reports. Or the interpretation was based on others sharing with the participant their opinions that they had heard in media analyses. An example of a cause and effect-complex causal linkage schema was given by Darrell, a black 47-year-old college basketball coach, who said he understood why Clinton should not appear with Jesse Jackson in the campaign. He concluded that a Clinton appearance with Jackson would give bigots a reason to not vote for Clinton. His reasoning was based on listening to Rush Limbaugh's anti-Jackson sentiments and all the callers who were proBush. Darrell said that a joint appearance would "give people more fuel to fire — and some people are Rush Limbaugh fanatics." If Clinton appeared with Jackson, those Limbaugh supporters would turn off on Clinton, and he felt it more important for the good of the country that Clinton get elected than appear with Jackson. However, it was unclear even after questioning Darrell whether he formulated this interpretation on his own or whether he had heard it from the media.

Shirley, a white 36-year-old low-political-interest secretary, displayed a simple causal linkage when she said that she avoided many political stories. "It's not that I'm not interested in them. It's more of my cynical attitude; how much can you believe that they're telling you? And I don't trust the media a lot." She also said the media took things out of context and distorted stories, which aggravated her. This may have been a simple causal linkage — she distrusted the media and thus political stories weren't to be believed. However, it also displayed an institutional judgment that the media should be nonbiased and weren't.

Person judgment schema

Use of person judgment schema was abundant in this unique campaign with a businessman and two career politicians for candidates. Many participants did not look beyond the profession labels and used their concepts or norms of business and politics as judgments. In spite of recent scandals of savings and loan collapses, overpaid executives, and Donald Trump's financial misdealings, many participants saw the businessman as a hero in American life. Thus, businessmen were clean, wholesome, and able to make astute judgments, and businessmen who were rich didn't need money from a government job and would be above corruption. In the early part of the interviews, Helen, a white 70-year-old housewife, had enjoyed reading about Perot because he was different and "wouldn't put up with failures," which was an example of the successful businessman person judgment. Those participants who did not support Perot mentioned that he may have known how to run a business, but it took give-and-take to run a country.

Politicians usually were considered "sleazy" and unscrupulous. Generally, the degree of this "sleaze" depended on whether the participant was a Democrat or Republican and the candidate was a Democrat or Republican.

For example, Tom, a white self-employed owner of a day care center in his home, lumped all Republicans together as conservative and bigoted and refused to find out more information about Republican candidates. He started the political season by avoiding the Republican convention because it "just made you sick — with Pat Buchanan. It's just hate. . . . and then they define families in such a way that they have to make $70,000 and have straight teeth or something." He had saved a newspaper column of Buchanan's that appeared after the convention and said he knew he should read it so liberals knew what was being said, but he just couldn't bring himself to read it. He added he also couldn't listen to Limbaugh. "I've decided I don't like him, but I've never listened to him. I just get the idea that he's way over there in Pat Buchanan's world." So Tom slotted Rush Limbaugh and Pat Buchanan in the same person judgment schema of conservative Republicans and chose not to pay attention to either of them.

Dora, a white 59-year-old Republican nurse, was convinced that politicians were evil and finally voted for Perot. She decided he was a businessman and different from standard politicians. Another example of her person judgment schema was her belief that Clinton was dysfunctional because he came from a dysfunctional family.

Another person judgment was that politicians were rich and attended fancy schools. Darrell watched the paid-for-by-Democrats half-hour show on election eve and was surprised to find that Clinton had come from a poor background because Darrell had connected Clinton's schooling to wealth. This election eve broadcast was important to Darrell and several others and underscores the need for repeating information late in the campaign for those voters who are undecided.

Myron, a white 49-year-old Republican lawyer disgusted with the Republican party, didn't want to hear stories about Perot. "I really shut off stuff about Perot. I think that he quit and I don't want to hear anymore about him." The "once a quitter, always a quitter" attitude showed a person judgment and also was an example of an institutional judgment that politicians shouldn't quit and more was expected of them than regular people.

This study found that some person judgments basic to American culture were altered. Although there have been exceptions, military service or at least the willingness to serve has been traditionally an unofficial qualification to be President. This judgment, combined with the person judgment that draft avoiders are not patriotic, was present in the campaign. However, a new person judgment of the draft avoider was developed in this campaign by several respondents. For example, Helen's son had left college and served in Vietnam. She said in the first interview, "I don't know, it [Clinton's avoidance] seems very, very unfair to a certain segment of our men . . . I really didn't like to hear that story." She related talking about the draft issue with her husband and said, "[He said] 'maybe we should forget about the past and' . . ." She couldn't finish the sentence because she started to cry. The draft issue and Clinton was a very personal topic. However, she later decided to vote for Clinton after talking to her son and husband at length about who would be the best president.

Helen's person judgment changed. Draft avoiders can be patriotic; they can even be elected president. Formerly, antiwar activities and military service did not mix in America's public arena although it did privately. For example, one of the control group participants was a Vietnam veteran who became an antiwar protester when returning from Vietnam. He voted for Clinton in 1992. With a newly created person judgment of patriotic draft avoider, perhaps even a woman could be elected President in the future.

Institutional judgment schema

Participants often processed specific election stories according to an institutional judgment schema. Elections were part of the political culture, and there were certain norms of elections. For example, when participants discussed the story of Bush's announcement of the sale of jets, thus boosting McDonnell Douglas aircraft company's economic status, both Republicans and Democrats saw it as political patronage. However, Eleanor — a Democrat and a retired high school English teacher — said that Bush would have been remiss if he had not made the announcement. In the "one does what one has to do" vein, she said that she understood that presidents needed to do these things to stay in power. She added that even FDR would have awarded military contracts in an election year. Thus, she articulated one of the behavioral norms of institutional judgments of elections. Politicians do what they have to do in order to get elected. Likewise, Clinton's and Bush's visits to the National Guard convention in Denver were seen as a behavioral norm of political theatre. For example, Randy remembered a vivid picture of the speech and said it reminded him of past elections when both candidates would appear before the American Legion or Veterans for Foreign Wars to receive an endorsement.

Hillary Clinton's visit to local Stephens College also was a good example of an accepted part of political theatre. Tom, a Democrat, cynically interpreted her visit and speech's theme of "everyone should register and vote" as the Democrats keeping her on a leash — not letting her talk about anything too controversial. Laura, a white Stephens College student, on the other hand, saw Mrs. Clinton's speech as a wonderful political event. She was the only respondent who actually participated in a political event other than voting.

For purposes of this study, the media were considered a political institution although they traditionally are not tied to a party. Response to political information was colored by behavioral norms ascribed to the media by the participants. Examples of these norms were: the media should be fair and unbiased, the media should give adequate information for political decision-making, and the media should assume that voters are intelligent.

This study showed that a new norm about the media was beginning to surface: although the news is expected to conform to all of the above norms (fairness, etc.), nonnews media may be held to a different standard when producing political news. For example, the "Today" show was considered news, and the anchors were held to the news media norm of fairness. Randy, a white high-political-interest pharmaceutical company salesman, pegged political stories into the institutional judgment schema believing the media should be totally nonbiased, or at least not biased against conservatives. Randy felt the liberal media were constantly finding negative things to report. "I watched the vice president this morning on one of those shows in an interview and they were just after his throat. . . .there was nothing positive about the entire interview. They were constantly trying to nail him with something."

However, Rush Limbaugh was not held to those standards because he was entertainment or nonnews media. Participants may have been very angry about him and his show, but the news' standards were not applied to his show or others such as Larry King Live. This conclusion needs to be further studied because it has great implications for the public arena because nonnews media were used extensively in the 1992 campaign to reveal candidates.

Cultural norm and American interest schema

The cultural norm and American interest schema was especially prevalent in descriptions of voting as a desired activity and a necessary part of American political life. In this study, two themes arose from the cultural norms and American interests schema. The themes were self reliance and accountability or narrow individualism versus broad communitarianism — themes reflected in both the media's perception of its own roles and in traditional political thinking (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler and Tipton, 1985; Dionne, 1991). Information about voting particularly fit those schemata. Some of the participants who saw voting as a freedom or right processed political information with an individualism schema. Shirley was a good example of a freedom or self-reliant schema. She did not feel that voting was necessary on a national election level and processed information about the candidates based on that schema. She did, however, have a sense of responsibility to vote in local elections such as the school board. Those who saw voting as a responsibility and duty processed voting according to a communitarianism schema. For example, Dora in a long rambling answer connected voting to responsibility, and the need to assume responsibility was connected to people's lack of concern in passing on AIDS to others. She felt very strongly that as an American one had responsibilities not just to vote but also to gather political information and to be politically involved both locally and nationally.

Throughout the interviews, Gary, a 59-year-old white realtor who voted for Bush, appeared to react to news based on a cultural norm schema. For example, he put partisanship aside after the election even though very proBush and said, "Isn't it wonderful how the American system works — that we can have a peaceful change of government?"

The theme in the American interest schema of the nation as a community was considered a norm only by some of the participants. Although this study agreed with previous research that geography no longer dominated the participants' political behavior (Beck, 1991), the transition to the broader interpretation of a national community was not made by all participants. For example, the Los Angeles riots were related locally by some as a problem affecting even the local city while others saw it as a problem that didn't affect the local city. Many of the participants also felt strongly about their community, supporting the "bake sale" theory that strong community involvement is necessary for political involvement (Pomper and Semekos, 1991). Although participants' involvement as volunteers, etc., was minimal, the participants did feel a stake or pride in their community.

Human interest and empathy schema

Use of the human interest and empathy schema was especially prevalent in discussions about Clinton's draft status. Many of the participants said that they knew someone who also avoided the draft. Most but not all of those participants were Democrats. Human interest and empathy did not happen in stories about Perot's explanation for dropping out of the race. This event caused more of an institutional or person judgment. Participants could forgive a young man's poor judgment in avoiding the draft. But once a candidate was in the political kitchen, they believed that he should be able to stand the heat.

Often, as Graber suggested, several schemata were operating simultaneously. For example, Helen combined both human interest and empathy with a person judgment about Clinton's draft status. Randy processed news about the Family Leave Bill with an institution judgment schema that the government should not interfere with private business while using a complex causal linkage or cause-and-effect sequence as he explained the behind-the-scene politics of the bill.

Which stories sought by voters

When asked what political stories they sought out, there was a difference in low-level political interest panelists and high-level interest panelists. Participants were labeled low- or high-interest by identifying themselves in the initial phone contact even though they were not asked their level of political interest. The low-interest panelists did not seek out political stories. Indeed, identification of themselves as such was quite accurate because the researcher observed little interest in politics or knowledge of issues throughout the interviews. These low-interest panelists varied in education level from high school to graduates of college. One participant, Jenny, a white hospital clerk with a high school education, said in the initial screening interview that she was not interested in politics and thus wouldn't make a good participant. Then, in the interviews she had difficulty answering specific questions about political events. For example, she could not answer questions about political stories on television even though she regularly "watched" television news and programs because she said the television only was on to keep her company while her husband was at work.

Some political stories appeared to not get past screening operating schemata to be processed. For example, Laura disliked Bush and used a person judgment of politicians to screen information. She said she turned off her ears when she heard the usual pat political phrases. Avoidance behavior appeared to be quite common for the panelists. They avoided stories that were in conflict with their judgments or schemata and attended to issues in which they were interested. This study agreed that there was evidence for Fiske and Taylors' perseverance effect. Even with continued new information about Perot, participants stuck to their original schema of judging him as an honest businessman.

How then did the participants ever process mediated information that was contrary to their belief systems? In the last stages of the campaign, this study showed that it would take new forms of mediated political information to penetrate the shield. By September/October, participants had — knowingly or unknowingly — processed much information from the nomination process. Very few of the participants just "dropped into" the political process in the first interview. Thus, new forms — such as Perot's infomercials — succeeded as ways to force people to pay attention. Even those who did not back Perot gained some issue knowledge from the infomercials.

This study confirmed Graber's findings that processing mediated messages depended on the history of the participant. Participants were shaped by their past beliefs, experiences, and interpretations. For example, Delores and Ted both processed their views about abortion according to past experiences. Ted, a 74-year-old retired former coach, said that he had never talked to anyone about it before, but someone in his past who meant a lot to him had had an abortion and died. Ted, the consummate Republican, said several times in the first interviews that he could not support the Republican's antiabortion stance even though he would vote Republican. Finally, in the last interview he related his personal experience with abortion.

Most participants in this study did not clearly remember where they heard or saw mediated political messages. Although the diaries were useful to some in sorting out the sources of their political information, the diaries were often incomplete. In interviews, panelists had great difficulty in remembering stories' sources. Several of the high-level interest participants such as Tom and Randy would remember that they heard it on the radio in the car and then looked in the newspaper for more information. The low-level interest participants seldom used the newspaper for more information.

Thus, although Choi and Fredin's research suggests that television becomes a reinforcement to newspapers but makes little or no contribution to issue discrimination (1987), this study does not agree. Newspaper reading — or the remembering of their use — was very sparse in this campaign by most of the participants and would not have encouraged complicated issue discrimination. Also, for several of the high-level participants who traveled with their jobs, National Public Radio was a major source of information. This finding requires further study.

International stories were mediated in different ways. As recall of Bosnia stories showed, there was only so much room in participants' minds for news. When interesting local or national news filled their mind, international news was crowded out. When news didn't affect directly the United States, participants responded with answers such as "foggy," "didn't register," "bits and pieces," and "if it's not what I want to hear, I change the channel." During the debates, little international news penetrated participant's minds. But as seen in a content sampling of newspapers and television news during the period of this study, less international news penetrated the front pages and main newscasts. Participants may have simply been reflecting what they were offered in the media.

This study showed that participants had not developed a health care vocabulary equal to their deficit vocabulary. Because the health care issue had not been primed as extensively in talk shows, the nomination race, and previous campaigns, participants knew less about the issue than the deficit. This underscores Graber's conclusion that repetition is necessary for political information to be retained. What the media see as needless repetition may be necessary for voters to be able to come to a consensus. Also, repetition over a long period of time — perhaps even several years — may be necessary to change voters' vocabulary and increase understanding of issues.

A new finding of this study was "echo" news. If a sound bounces off several walls, it becomes fainter and fainter. As political news or events bounced through several shows, the original message got fainter and fainter. Panelists would say that they remembered seeing or hearing a political news story. However, as they talked about the story, they would admit that they hadn't actually seen or heard the story. Rather, they had seen a discussion of the story on a television show such as "Today." For example, when asked if they had seen Clinton play his saxophone on "Arsenio Hall," almost all of the participants said yes. Then, they would quickly add that they hadn't actually seen him play, but they had heard about the event on another show or read about it. The image of Clinton's willingness to answer questions in the "Arsenio" appearance was lost while the image of Clinton and his saxophone was retained. This phenomenon, especially prevalent in 1992, could be called "echo" news.

2) How does an audience use the media to solve the problem of whether to vote?

This study supported the theory that voting is a simultaneous act. If the intention to vote as a civic act is separated from making choices, there was not much evidence in this study that participants learned about the intention to vote from the media. Participants did not express that they learned about voting as a responsibility or a self-reliant act from the media, although that may have happened. More likely, participants learned their cultural norm responses about voting as part of their formal education. Hence, even though voting percentages were declining, the civic notion of voting appeared to be part of the cultural heritage passed on in classrooms. Because voting participation percentages began to dip after 1960, one could guess that some of the participants were still products of teachers who did consider voting a civic duty. However, because chronic nonvoters in the last two decades include the educated, middle-class, and professional (Gans, 1990), the civic task of educating future voters on the responsibilities of voting may fall more and more on the media.

The media were not used by most participants to solve the problem of actual registration. Local newspapers gave voters adequate participatory information to vote. However, participants in this study had registered by late summer. Most did not remember that they had directly received information on registering from the media, although Richard did remember that he had seen in the *Columbia Daily Tribune* that Nowell's grocery store was a location for registration. Most remembered personal contacts as the impetus for voting registration.

However, as in McQuail's reformulated version of uses and gratification, media reports were used in solving the physical problem of when to arrive at the polls to avoid long lines on November 3. This information helped participants deal with a somewhat unfamiliar voting process — a national election with higher than usual turnout. This information reinforced the intention to vote no matter what the choices were.

Voters in this study did legitimize the simultaneous theory of voting by finding out as much as possible about the candidates. This seeking of political information did not mean that the participants told themselves that they had three choices and then religiously set out to find all the information they could about the choices. Rather, the participants became aware of issues and personalities, but did not always seek the finer points of issues. For example, panelists knew that the democratic ideal was to be informed about candidates' platforms on health care reform. The participants said that if the different stands were written in the newspaper for comparison purposes, then they would have studied it. Although that material was present throughout the campaigns in newspapers, few participants used that available information. Rather, they realized health care was a relevant, serious issue, and they processed information according to various schemata to project how a certain candidate would deal with the problem.

For example, whether a person judgment or an institutional judgment, most participants assumed that Clinton advocated socialized or government-controlled medicine, using a "Democrats are socialists" stereotype. Most panelists assumed that because Perot was a businessman, he would solve health care by "letting things go just as they are." Because Bush was a Republican, some participants assumed he also would just "let things just as they are." However, the repeated Republican message that malpractice suits were the cause of the health care woes had worked its way into the consciousness of the participants, and they remembered this tenet of Bush's plan.

In the end, none of the participants knew what specific health care solutions would be. But it may not have made a difference in their decisions. Darrell summed it up by saying Clinton's specific health care policy did not matter to him because he thought Clinton was a caring person. This kind of connection of personality to issues may be the underlying effect of the media on the intention to vote. Some of the issues will "get through" to the voters and some will remember them. But connecting images of the candidate to the issues continued as a main way that the participants chose their candidate.

The deficit issue was much more concrete to participants. Because of the priming of the 1988 election, 1992 nomination contests, and Perot's appearances on talk shows, the deficit was an easier political story for participants to understand. Thus, they knew specific ideas from each candidate's deficit-reducing proposal.

One assumption in American democratic mythology is that the candidates want voters to study the issues and make a decision based on what they will do to solve that problem. This may not be true. Candidates do want the voter to think that their solutions are correct; however, they may not want to give concrete solutions. Rather candidates may prefer to allow voters to believe that they have the solutions. Possibly, this intent began to change in the 1992 election as voters began to insist on answers as exemplified in the Charlotte Project.[2] Early in the primaries, Democratic candidates offered to voters books explaining their proposals. These books may have helped prime and alert the media to nuances in issues, but it is questionable whether vast amounts of voters studied the books. In this study, only one person in both the participant group and the control group had ordered and read a book from a candidate.

Analysis of the diaries showed that keeping the diary did not guarantee that participants remembered more or all of the stories, but in general, analysis of the diaries reinforced patterns of recollection and usage noted from the interviews. So high-interest participants not only had excellent recall of political stories in interviews, but also their diary submissions were more complete and longer while the low-interest participants' submissions were incomplete and brief. The diaries also showed that by mid-October the media's stories served several functions of reinforcing existing beliefs for those citizens who had already made up their minds about a candidate and of providing information for those voters who were undecided. One observation from the diaries that did not surface in the interviews was that using the media was viewed as part of the work week. Participants considered the weekend as "days off" from using the media and noted that sentiment in the diaries. Participants remembered more one-on-one discussions with co-workers, family, and friends in their diaries than in interviews, and thus the diaries became very useful for recall. In those community discussions, the media were used as a catalyst, thus encouraging a political community by triggering interaction among citizens.

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[2] See Edward D. Miller, The Charlotte Project, Helping citizens take back democracy (St. Petersburg, Fla.: The Poynter Institute for Media Studies, 1994). Miller details how The Charlotte Observer covered the 1992 election by acting as if political coverage should be about what's important to citizens. Citizens' questions — not reporters' or politicians' — were used extensively in coverage.

Conclusions

As stated in the significance of the study section, the value of this qualitative research is that the researcher has access to the development of the thought process through open-ended interviews that usually isn't available in survey research. Although the conclusions in the analysis section are not generalizable, this study gives valuable new theories that can be tested in later elections. Several of the conclusions supported previous research by other researchers. Other conclusions give more direction for future research and are of interest because these conclusions underscore that political communication is in a state of flux and media outlets must understand these changing factors as they fulfill the educational function outlined by Hodges (Hodges, 1986). One conclusion — that the civic task of educating future voters continues to fall more and more on the media — certainly shows the need for media outlets to continue improving political coverage. As previously stated, some outlets are experimenting with changing their political coverage to be more consumer oriented (see Footnote 2 on The Charlotte Project). Still, more could be accomplished as far as encouraging registration, helping voters understand the nomination and election process, and providing more background on issues.

This study showed that new forms of communication — such as Perot's infomercials — were successful in forcing people to pay attention to campaign issues even if they were not Perot supporters. In the last stages of the campaign, new forms of mediated political information were necessary to penetrate the shield. By September/October, participants had — knowingly or unknowingly — processed much information from the nomination process. Very few of the participants just "dropped into" the political process in the first interview. Thus, new forms — such as Perot's infomercials — succeeded as ways to force people to pay attention. Even those who did not back Perot gained some issue knowledge from the infomercials. This conclusion is particularly relevant when tied with the study's conclusion that respondents developed a new behavioral norm of nonnews media not having to uphold the objectivity principle when reporting or covering political news. Much of the public's political information came from the nonnews media such as talk shows, call-in shows, and other "entertainment" shows. Indeed, in the 1992 campaign, it is difficult to say whether most of these shows constituted "entertaining news" or "newsy entertainment." As the lines continue to blur, journalistic principles of objectivity and fairness as once known may change even more radically. More research is need to understand what that blurring means for the future of media credibility and media use in political communication.

The finding that newspaper reading was very sparse in this campaign — or respondents' possessed weak memories about newspapers — needs further study because it may mean that citizens are not paying attention to needed information for complicated issue discrimination. However, in a media-saturated society it is difficult for respondents to isolate which media outlets were the source of information and further study on this should involve cues in the interview — showing local newspaper articles and clips from television shows.

The finding of "echo news" also is relevant for future elections and worthy of further study because of the possibility that as citizens believe they have actually seen a political event, the original meaning of the event becomes lost and only glamorous images remain. Certainly, this loss of meaning in retelling a story has happened previously in political communication. However, because most of these events are televised, the magnification of certain aspects and the belief that one has actually "participated" by watching an event can overshadow citizens understanding of issues.

Graber's outline of six schemata for political information processing was underscored in this study. Although the six schemata remained, there were new interpretations under the basic schemata as seen in the alteration of the person judgment that a draft avoider can be patriotic and can be elected. That new interpretation may lead to nomination of different types of candidates. But more importantly to political communication research, the alteration shows that schema can be changed slowly. The alternative types of communication and longer media exposures of the candidates such as appearing on talk shows and in "town hall" meetings may be the agents of change and thus continue the demise of the importance of political ads and network news in campaigns. As political parties' influence continues to lessen, "nonnews" media formats will have an even stronger role in dictating the shape of presidential elections.

Finally, confirming Graber's findings that processing mediated messages depends on the history of the participant and that repetition is necessary for retention of political information are important findings. As citizens continue to need to understand complex issues such as health care, the media must shape their coverage by utilizing repetitive coverage in new forms so voters who are coming into the information process can "catch up" with issues while not turning off those voters who have been paying attention to the media throughout the campaign.

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MARGINALIZING PEROT: VISUAL TREATMENT OF THE CANDIDATES IN THE 1992 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

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Communication scholars argue that the news media treat groups offering diverse opinions differently from groups supporting the status quo. One device used is marginalization whereby the media devote the majority of the time or space reserved for political candidates to Democrats and Republicans.

Through a content analysis of the visual content of two of the three presidential debates on four networks, this paper examines if and in what manner the networks marginalized Ross Perot in the 1992 presidential debates.

The results indicate the networks did little to upset the status quo. By including the third-party candidate in fewer total shots, in smaller image size, and in fewer shots with someone else than the mainstream candidates, the networks marginalized Perot. These results lend further "real world" support to previous findings that deviant political groups are portrayed less viably in the news media.

MARGINALIZING PEROT: VISUAL TREATMENT OF THE CANDIDATES IN THE 1992 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

Communication scholars have argued that the U.S. news media operate in a manner to support the status quo.[1] They suggest the widely embraced dogmas of impartiality and objectivity are mechanisms to guarantee the preservation of institutions and of the social order. The media divide events into legitimate main acts and illegitimate sideshows, such that, while groups offering diverse opinions may be present in the news media, their treatment differs from that of groups supporting the status quo.

Gitlin refers to this process as framing. Media frames are "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual."[2] Framing allows the news media to process large amounts of information quickly, and package it for efficient relay to audiences.

One framing device is marginalization whereby the media show political groups to be deviant or unrepresentative.[3] The news media may use this device in the treatment of third-party candidates for public office, especially during presidential campaigns. By devoting the majority of the time or space reserved for candidates to Democrats and Republicans, the news media marginalize third-party candidates.

The purpose of this paper is to examine if and in what manner the networks marginalized Ross Perot, the only third-party candidate to participate in the 1992 presidential debates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Altschull says the news media help maintain the social order by limiting access largely to groups who support ideological conventions. Political groups which depart from these conventions are labeled deviant and treated as having no legitimate right to be taken seriously. Only when dissident groups defy the law or behave in such an outrageous fashion that the news media cannot ignore the unusualness and conflictual nature of the behavior are they permitted access. But even then the group may not be considered legitimate.[4]

Miliband says the media contribute to the fostering of a climate of political conformity "by the presentation of views which fall outside the consensus as curious heresies..." He points out that radio and television, because they use public airwaves, must operate in a manner to at least suggest a high degree of political impartiality and objectivity. But this assumed impartiality and objectivity ends "at the point where political consensus itself ends..." Media treatments of groups vary systematically with the degree of deviance exhibited by a political group. "The more radical the dissent, the less impartial and objective the media."[5]

Paletz and Entman say that media depictions of political groups are important because they provide almost all of the knowledge the public possesses about such groups. Favorable coverage makes a group's policy agenda politically salient, legitimizes the group's demands and actions, and strengthens its ability to influence policy-makers.[6] What the media communicates about the group, how they frame and present it, influences audiences' beliefs about the political legitimacy of the group.[7]

Shoemaker and Reese suggest that communication is an essential part of defining deviance. The media do not just convey labels created by others, but may create deviant groups by the labels applied to the groups and the extent to which the groups are covered. Thus the media give importance to some people and groups by portraying them frequently, and marginalize others by presenting them less advantageously.[8]

According to these scholars, the media vary their coverage of political groups in relation to how deviant they perceive the groups to be. The more deviant a group is perceived as being, the more newspeople will treat it as holding ridiculous or eccentric views, and the less legitimately it will be portrayed. When the media perceive and label a group as deviant, they work to delegitimize it.

Shoemaker tested this theorized effect in two controlled experiments.[9] In the first, subjects evaluated the legitimacy of a fabricated right-wing splinter political party after reading either a negative, ridiculing newspaper opinion column or a positive, serious newspaper opinion column about the fabricated party. The control group evaluated the party without reading either article. The results partially supported her hypothesis that negative, ridiculing media coverage of a deviant political group can decrease its legitimacy.

The second experiment used four fabricated political parties, a larger, less-heterogenous group of subjects, and newspaper articles which were objective in style but subjective in content. Four factors were included in the analysis: evaluation, legality, viability, and stability of the fabricated parties. The results indicated support among all four factors for the hypothesis that negative, ridiculing media treatments can cause a deviant political party to be perceived as less legitimate.

Shoemaker also sought to determine if this effect occurred in the "real world." That is, if there is a linear, negative relationship between the deviance of a political group and the degree to which news items about the group portray it as being legitimate. She tested this hypothesis using a content analysis of seven newspapers over a one year time period.[10] Deviance was measured by asking news and political editors from the 100 largest U.S. daily newspapers to place eleven political groups on four scales: a political spectrum, similarity to most Americans, amount of change advocated by the group, and how close the editor felt to the group. The four scales were added together to form a deviance index. Results showed that the more deviant the editors perceived a group to be, the less favorable the newspaper articles were about the group, and the less normative and viable the group was portrayed. There was a statistically significant linear relationship between the deviance of a political group and its overall media treatment as a legitimate political contender.

The Shoemaker research suggests that the media do not screen out deviant ideas, but rather portray them in a way calculated to underscore their deviance. The normal is reaffirmed by being presented routinely and in juxtaposition to the deviant, which competes at the boundaries for attention.[11] Anecdotal evidence of these practices can be found in the literature.

Epstein reports that in late 1968 or early 1969 NBC producers decided to discontinue using stories which showed black militant leaders threatening violent acts against society, and that earlier two black militants, Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown, had been "banned" from the network. NBC also gave strict orders that there was to be no live or film coverage of the "counterinauguration" planned by antiwar "dissidents" during the Nixon inauguration in 1969.[12]

Gitlin describes how CBS News and The New York Times used media frames to identify a 1960s left-wing movement, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), as contrary to the mainstream political system's ideology. To treat SDS as a legitimate deviant group with a democratic right to freedom of expression would have required that the media take the group seriously at face value. Instead, Gitlin says, "media treatments oscillated between images of dangerous SDS and ineffectual SDS; in either case, SDS as the deviant other."[13]

Tuchman describes how coverage of the women's movement was beset by an excess of editorial and reportorial jibes. The movement's members complained that male editors refused to take the movement seriously, which was demonstrated by the slighting nickname "women's lib" conferred by the media on the movement. News coverage of the movement was characterized by ostracism and ridicule, and defining the movement as peculiar.[14]

Gillespie says the exposure the mainstream media normally give third-party political groups is tiny, and that coverage often ridicules and marginalizes the third-parties. Because the media view the campaign as a horserace, they generally train their sights upon the Republican and Democratic front-runners.[15] For example, news media coverage of the Prohibition Party's 1979 national convention in Birmingham consisted of "a few humorous clips on local television news, a newspaper article or two. One on the front page of the afternoon paper (told) of the eccentricities of these Prohibition windmill-tilters."[16]

Researchers studying three national newspapers and three weekly news magazines discovered that in 1980 these media gave Carter and Reagan ten times the coverage received by the other eleven candidates combined. Considering the significance of the John Anderson bid that year, it is possible the gap in most years is much larger.[17]

Ross Perot, Gillespie says, also received derisive treatment during the 1992 presidential campaign when the word "bizarre" began to appear in some media characterizations of him.[18] For example, an article in the October 1992 issue of Vanity Fair alleged Perot had used electronic surveillance equipment to spy on his own family fueling the idea that Perot was bizarre and authoritarian.[19]

These anecdotes, and most of the research in this area, typically focus on the verbal content of media messages. However, visuals, including both print photos and television video, can also be distorted, by cropping, angles, and shot selection. Gitlin includes two pictures of an antiwar protest. One made available by UPI, but not used by the New York Times, showed protest marchers holding placards close up in the foreground, relatively more prominent than a group of counterprotesters in the background across the street. Instead the Times used another photo, a long shot of both groups, but taken from the side of the street where the counterprotesters marched, thus minimizing the antiwar protesters, both in size and perspective.[20]

Television can distort people visually through camera perspective and other techniques. It can structure a symbolic environment by giving greater attention--in the form of more time or greater prominence--to certain people, places, or events than others.[21]

Lang and Lang point out that political news that reaches the public through live telecasts or in regularly scheduled TV news programs is the product of internal decisions regarding how cameras are deployed for visual coverage and what the visual content should be. These decisions ultimately affect the image the viewer perceives.[22] The Langs also say that television tends to personalize politics through closeups that encourage viewers to scrutinize the faces and demeanor of people who appear on the screen. But such a close-up view can distract from what is being said because it highlights how the speaker looks, whether he or she is nervous or relaxed, seems friendly or distant. Thus, what people see for themselves is influenced by what they are shown.[23]

HYPOTHESES

Televised debates have become a ritual of presidential politics. Normally, third-party or independent candidates cannot beg their way onto the debate stage.[24] But in 1992, Ross Perot was included in televised debates along with Bill Clinton and George Bush. However, merely including Perot does not mean he was treated equally.

The research above and the fact that Perot was outside the political mainstream suggests the following research hypotheses:

H1: Ross Perot will be marginalized by the networks' visual treatment in the 1992 presidential debates.

H2: The visual treatment of Perot will be progressively less favorable from one debate to the next.

For the 1992 presidential debates, one network produced a "switched feed" to all other networks for each debate. ABC produced the feed for the first debate, NBC for the second, and CBS for the third. This feed supplied shots of the candidates, moderator, panelists, and audience, from a variety of angels. Use of the pool feed reduced the number of necessary cameras on and behind the debate set. However, according to NBC's production manager, any network could supplement this "switched pool" feed with its own cameras positioned throughout the auditoria where the debates were held. All three commercial broadcast networks provided cameras for such a purpose. PBS chose to use the "switched pool" feed only.[25]

METHOD

The present study consists of an analysis of the visual content of two of the three presidential debates on four networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, and PBS). The first debate was not included because CBS tape-delayed coverage until early morning due to a major league baseball playoff game, and NBC joined the debate 18 minutes late in some parts of the country due to a long-running national football game.[26] The second and third presidential debates on each of the four networks was recorded on standard VHS video cassette recorders.

The author and two graduate students pretested the coding instrument using the first half of the first presidential debate for content. Intercoder reliability of the instrument ranged from 91% to 99% for the seven variables. Intracoder reliablity ranged from 95% to 98% for the three coders.[27]

The author numbered and coded each camera shot using the pre-tested coding instrument.[28] For this analysis a "shot" was defined as a segment in which the visual structure of the image remained constant. Instances in which camera movement (zoom, pan, tilt, etc.) changed the visual structure of the image were treated as separate shots. In addition to the debate number and the network on which it appeared, each shot was coded for the following factors:

Person or persons shown, including the candidates, panelists, the moderator, or members of the audience.

Type of Camera Movement: stationary, zoom, tilt, or pan.

Type of shot: "candidate" if it featured a candidate speaking; "reaction" if it featured someone reacting to the speaker; "question" if it featured someone asking a candidate a question; or "dual" if it included two or more of the above events. For example, a shot showing Bush reacting and Clinton speaking was coded as a dual shot.

Camera Framing of Composition: based on the field of view of the shot, represented by the image size displayed by the camera. A close-up produces a larger image size than does a long shot, and thus the person will appear closer to the viewer in a close-up than in a long shot.[29] In a close-up, the head and top of the shoulders were shown of the person. A long shot showed the entire body and some of the surroundings, such as the podium.

Dominant Camera Angle: the placement of the camera in relation to the person(s) featured. A "straight-on" angle meant the camera was positioned so that it faced the person featured, and was less than 45 degrees to either side of the person. A "profile" meant the camera was positioned 45 degrees or more to the side of the person featured so that the viewer saw more of one side of the person than the other. "Over-the-shoulder" meant the camera was positioned so that it looked over one person's shoulder at another person. The first person's shoulder and back of head, at least, were included in the shot.

Shots occurring before the debate began, before the first question was asked, or any used after the candidates' closing statements were not coded. However, shots used during the asking of questions by the moderator, panelist, or audience were coded.

Two additional variables were calculated by collapsing the raw data. The first, Total Shot Appearances, was measured by counting the number of shots each candidate appeared in individually, and with another candidate, the moderator, the panel, and/or the audience. When more than one candidate appeared in a shot, it was counted for each candidate individually, such that a single shot might be included in the totals for Bush, Clinton, and Perot. For example, a shot in the second debate showing Bush, Perot, and the audience would be included in the totals for Bush and Perot, but not Clinton. Shots that did not include at least one candidate were not counted.

Multi-shot Appearances was measured by subtracting the number of Oneshots each candidate appeared in from the Total Shot Appearances. Again, shots with more than one candidate would be counted for each individually, and shots that did not include at least one candidate were not counted.

For each debate, all shots on two networks were coded simultaneously, frame-by-frame. The PBS tape and the tape of the network producing the pool feed were coded side-by-side first, then the remaining two tapes were coded against the PBS tape. The PBS tape was thus coded three times and was used for an intracoder reliability test, resulting in 98% agreement. Approximately 10 percent of the shots on all networks were also coded a second time individually, and these were used for an intercoder reliability test. The percent of agreement for this test ranged from 88% to 96% for both debates.[30]

RESULTS

The content analysis of the two debates yielded 3,761 total shots. The second debate provided nearly twice as many shots

(2,429, 64.6%) as the third debate (1,332, 35.4%). This was probably due to the format of the debates. In the second debate, questions came from audience members positioned throughout the auditorium, and the candidates were free to move about the central stage area, at times nearly walking out into the audience. This required adjusting the composition of shots in order to provide a shot not blocked by someone and/or showing faces rather than backs of heads. But in the third debate, questions came from either the moderator or one of three panelists, and the candidates stood behind podiums. This made for more predictable shot composition.

The four networks provided nearly equal percentages of shots, varying by less than a single percentage point across debates. ABC had 25.4% of the total number of shots, CBS had 25%, and NBC and PBS each had 24.8%.

There was no variation, shot-by-shot, between NBC and PBS. CBS varied only rarely from the pool feed, including when producing the pool feed for the third debate. Whenever CBS varied from the pool feed, the network substituted extreme long shots of the entire auditorium from a very high angle for wide shots showing the central stage area on the pool feed.

ABC provided the most variation from the pool feed in both debates. This is consistent with previous research findings, where ABC has been categorized as the most innovative of the three commercial broadcast networks with regards to variety of visual presentation.[31] On occasion, ABC would "jump ahead" of the pool feed--for example, cutting to a reaction shot more quickly than the pool feed, and often with greater impact. Other times it would cut to a shot similar to that of the pool feed, then switch to the pool feed as if to "catch up." In such cases, the ABC shot would be very similar to the pool feed shot, but from a slightly different angle, indicating the ABC camera was located next to the pool camera. Viewers at home would, however, not notice this unless they were skipping back and forth between the various networks. But ABC also provided unique shots, including using a split-screen in the third debate to show both the candidate speaking and the reaction from another candidate.

However, because there was generally a lack of variation between the networks, further analysis used only PBS and ABC data. PBS best reflected the pool feed in both debates because it did not use separate, individual cameras at either debate. And ABC not only provided the only true variation, it's debate coverage received the highest ratings.[32]

Table 1 presents the percentage of shot appearances for each candidate for the two debates.[33] Each video feed included Bush in shots more often than either Clinton or Perot, who were included relatively equally by each network. Perhaps this is because Bush was the incumbent and therefore came under greater scrutiny in both questioning and in the responses of the other candidates.

Table 1 about here

ABC increased the inclusion of Bush in shots from the second to the third debate, while maintaining the inclusion of Clinton and Perot. The pool feed (hereafter referred to as PBS) decreased the inclusion of Clinton and Perot between the debates, while maintaining the inclusion of Bush. However, in all cases, the changes are relatively small.

It seems logical, given the format of the second debate, that candidates would appear in a greater percentage of shots when they were not positioned behind a podium and separated from the audience. However, the increase in the inclusion of Bush in ABC's video of the third debate doesn't fit this logic. Note also that the decrease in the inclusion of Clinton between the debates on ABC is very small. Perhaps both these changes are due to ABC's use of a split-screen device in the third debate, predominantly for Bush and Clinton. The split-screen would show close-ups of two different candidates simultaneously so that viewers could see a candidate speaking and another reacting.

The majority of shots used in the debates included only one person. In the second debate, slightly more than half the shots featured only one person (ABC=52.7%, PBS=52.2%), but more than two-thirds of the shots in the third debate did so (ABC=69.3%, PBS=71.8%). This difference is likely due to the format for each debate since it would be easier to include only one person in a shot when all participants are on the stage and remain in stationary positions, as they were in the third debate. Table 2 shows the percentage of one-person shots (oneshots) featuring each candidate by each network across the debates.

Table 2 about here

There was virtually no variation between the two networks for either debate. Overall, Clinton appeared less frequently in oneshots (28.2%) than either Bush (35.8%) or Perot (36.0%). In the second debate, Perot appeared in a greater percentage of oneshots (36.6%) than Bush (34.1%), but their order was reversed and the gap slightly wider in the third debate (Bush=38.8%, Perot=34.9%).

Perhaps the decrease in showing Bush and the corresponding increase in showing Perot in oneshots between the debates and across the networks resulted from the amount of time the moderator allowed each candidate to speak. Although the present study did not measure this variable, Bush did complain about Perot receiving too much time in the second debate, and Perot made a similar complaint about Bush in the third.

The flip-side to being featured alone in a oneshot is being featured with someone else (multi-shots). Table 3 shows the percentage of appearances in shots with another person for each candidate. Although Perot may have appeared in a greater percentage oneshots than Clinton and in about an equal percentage as Bush, he appeared in a lesser percentage of multi-shots.

Table 3 about here

Overall, Bush appeared in a greater percentage of multi-shots (37.4%) than did Clinton (33.6%) or Perot (29%). On ABC, the percentage of multi-shots for Bush (2nd=37.8%, 3rd=39.7%) and Clinton (2nd=33.2%, 3rd=34.5%) increased between the second and third debate, while the percentage of multi-shots Perot appeared in decreased (2nd=29%, 3rd=25.8%). This is likely due to the network's use of a split-screen in the third debate, most frequently showing Bush and Clinton.

On PBS, the percentage of multi-shots for all candidates remained relatively steady between the debates, with a slight increase for Clinton (2nd=33.3%, 3rd=34.3%) and a slight decrease for Perot (2nd=30.4%, 3rd=29.5%).

Also of interest is the choice of field of view compositions for these oneshots, where the largest differences between candidates, networks and debates appears. Table 4 presents the percentage of oneshot fields of view for each candidate by each network across the debates.

Table 4 about here

In the second debate, ABC used close-ups in nearly half of the oneshots of Clinton (48.5%), but in only about a third for Bush (38.4%), and a medium close-up in nearly two-thirds of the oneshots of Perot (65.1%). The pool feed had nearly equal percentages of close-ups for Bush (40.5%) and Clinton (42.4%), and a slightly higher percentage of medium close-ups for Bush (54.7%) than Clinton (47.5%). But Perot was still framed in medium close-ups for about two-thirds of his oneshots (67.4%).

The medium close-up was used predominantly for all three candidates by both networks in the third debate. But on ABC, Clinton was shown in close-up twice as often as Perot (7.9% vs. 3.9%) and more than four times as often as Bush (1.8%). PBS had an even larger discrepancy. Clinton was shown in close-up nearly four times as often as Perot (12.5% vs. 3.8%) and more than seven times as often as Bush (1.7%).

Both networks only used extreme close-ups in the second debate, probably because of the format, but only ABC used this field of view for Perot. And ABC used a long-shot only for Bush, and only in the second debate.

DISCUSSION

Both hypotheses were supported. Ross Perot was marginalized by the networks' visual treatment, and the treatment became less favorable between the second and third debate. The candidates did receive different visual treatment during the debates and both Bush and Clinton received more favorable treatment than Perot on several measurements.

Both PBS and ABC included Bush in a greater percentage of camera shots, including shots with multiple candidates, than either Clinton or Perot. Moreover, Bush and Clinton appeared in a greater percentage of multi-shots than did Perot, who appeared in a greater percentage of oneshots than did Bush or Clinton. Thus Perot was marginalized because he was more likely to be shown alone than with another person than were Bush or Clinton. This was particularly true on ABC, where Perot appeared in a smaller percentage of total shots and multi-shots than either Bush or Clinton, and the percentage in both categories decreased between the second and third debate.

Perot also received less favorable "image size" treatment than the other candidates, especially on ABC. Oneshots of Clinton were typically tighter (more close up) than they were of Bush, which were typically tighter than those of Perot. The close-up shot is generally believed to intensify the visual image by directing the viewer's attention to eventful detail and giving the image greater importance.[35] So using a tighter image of one candidate over another would indicate grater importance for that candidate, and thus Perot was treated as the least important. And once again, the treatment became less favorable between the second and third debate.

Perhaps the most noticeable marginalizing of Perot is ABC's use of split-screens in the third debate. Perot only appeared in one split-screen shot with Bush, and none with Clinton, while Bush and Clinton appeared together in 16 split-screen shots. In fact, ABC once used a split-screen of Bush and Clinton reacting while Perot was speaking. The significance of these differences is illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1 about here

The split-screens reduced the physical space between the candidates so that they appeared to be nose-to-nose with one another (Figure 1) much more than the two-shot typically used by the pool feed at the same point in the debate (Figure 2).

Figure 2 about here

Because the split-screen showed close-ups of two candidates, it intensified the conflict between the candidates shown, and marginalized the one not shown. But this may have also been a reflection of the reality of the debate because Bush more often attacked Clinton than Perot, and Clinton more often responded to statements by Bush than by Perot. About one-third of the way through the debate, Bush even stated, "...my argument is not with Ross Perot, it is more with Governor Clinton." And toward the end of the debate Bush offered his explanation of the difference between himself and Clinton, while ignoring Perot.

More evidence of Perot being marginalized can be seen in shots from cameras positioned to either side of the stage. Both ABC and the pool feed tended to use multiple-candidate shots from cameras positioned to the left side of the stage. Because Clinton stood on the left, Bush in the center, and Perot on the right, the angles these cameras were placed at resulted in decreasing the physical distance between Clinton and Bush while increasing the physical distance between Bush and Perot (see Figure 3), again marginalizing Perot.

Figure 3 about here

Cameras on the right side of the stage were positioned behind Perot rather than in front, as were the cameras on the left of the stage. Multiple-candidate shots from these cameras typically looked over Perot's shoulder, again presenting him less advantageously (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 about here

However, Perot was clearly not part of mainstream politics in the 1992 presidential race and therefore ABC's treatment of him may be nothing more than a reflection of the climate of the debates.

CONCLUSIONS

ABC clearly marginalized Perot through its visual treatment of the candidates. But the differences in visual treatment of the candidates tended to be subtle and therefore perhaps imperceptible to many observers. Thus, the extent to which they influenced voters' perceptions of the candidates can only be conjecture. The idea that visual elements of communication media influence the message is widely accepted. But the nature of that influence remains speculative and can only be inferred from limited empirical studies and theoretical constructs of film and television aesthetics. Future research might explore what influence these aesthetics have on viewer perceptions of the candidates in the debates.

It's possible the present study over-simplified the visual treatment of the candidates. Rather than comparing appearances in shottypes, perhaps greater differences will be found by examining shot sequences used during questioning of each candidate, and the candidate's response to a question, or reaction to another candidate's response.

Viewers are not likely to skip from network to network during live coverage of an event like the debates. They may be more likely to do so during the analysis periods which traditionally have followed these events in order to hear different perspectives on the event. This could also diminish the influence of any variations from the pool feed. But it can be argued, particularly through anecdotal evidence, that ABC viewers saw a truer representation of the climate of the debates than those who watched the pool feed.

ABC clearly attempted to highlight a traditional and important element of debate, namely confrontation. This is evident from the network's use of split-screens in the third debate, especially when Bush attacked Clinton. But it is also evident from the use of their own camera during Bush's closing statement in the second debate, when the network showed Bush gradually moving to stand behind his stool, placing a barrier between himself and the audience. This action subtly reflected charges that Bush was not connected to what was going on in "middle America." These charges had been highlighted earlier in the debate when an audience member asked the candidates how they had been personally affected by the deficit, and Bush had admittedly not understood the question.

Still, neither network did much to upset the status quo. By including the "deviant" candidate in fewer total shots, in smaller image size, and in fewer shots with someone else than the mainstream candidates, the networks marginalized Perot. Such actions provide evidence of Gitlin's notion of media framing, and Miliband's claim that media objectivity and impartiality end at the point where political consensus itself ends. The results reported in this paper lend further "real world" support to Shoemaker's findings that deviant political groups are portrayed less viably in the news media.

Notes

1. Such as: J. Herbert Altschull, Agents of Power: The Role of the News Media in Human Affairs (New York: Longman, 1984); Todd Gitlin, The Whole World is Watching (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Pat Lauderdale and Rhoda E. Estep, "The Bicentennial Protest: An Examination of Hegemony in the Definition of Deviant Political Activity," in Pat Lauderdale, ed., A Political Analysis of Deviance (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980); Ralph Miliband, The State in Capitalist Society (New York: Basic Books, 1969); David L. Paletz and Robert M. Entman, Media, Power, Politics (New York: Free Press, 1981); and Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese, Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content (New York: Longman, 1991).

2. Gitlin, The Whole World is Watching, 6-7.

3. Gitlin, The Whole World is Watching, 27.

4. Altschull, Agents of Power, 128-133.

5. Miliband, The State in Capitalist Society, 223-238.

6. Paletz and Entman, Media, Power, Politics, 124.

7. Paletz and Entman, Media, Power, Politics, 150.

8. Shoemaker and Reese, Mediating the Message, 41, 186.

9. Pamela J. Shoemaker, "The Perceived Legitimacy of Deviant Political Groups: Two Experiments on Media Effects," Communication Research 9 (April 1982):249-286.

10. Pamela J. Shoemaker, "Media Treatment of Deviant Political Groups," Journalism Quarterly 61 (Spring 1984):66-75, 82.

11. Shoemaker and Reese, Mediating the Message, 187.

12. Edward Jay Epstein, News from Nowhere: Television and the News (New York: Random House, 1973), 192.

13. Gitlin, The Whole World is Watching, 107. (emphasis in the original)

14. Gaye Tuchman, Making News (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 136-138.

15. J. David Gillespie, Politics at the Periphery: Third Parties in Two-Party America (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 33.

16. Gillespie, Politics at the Periphery, 7.

17. Steven J. Rosenstone, Roy L. Behr, and Edward H. Lazarus, Third Parties in America: Citizen Response to Major Party Failure (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press), 33.

18. Gillespie, Politics at the Periphery, 132-133.

19. Marie Brenner, "Perot's Final Days," Vanity Fair, 55 (October 1992): 74.

20. Gitlin, The Whole World is Watching, 50-51.

21. Shoemaker and Resse, Mediating the Message, 33.

22. Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, "Television Distortion in Political Reporting," in Politics and the Press, ed. Richard W. Lee (Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books, 1970), 145-168.

23. Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang, Politics and Television Re-Viewed (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1984), 204-20.

24. The only exception prior to 1992 was John Anderson, who debated Ronald Reagan in 1980. President Carter refused to join in a three-way debate, but did debate Reagan a week before the election. Gillespie, Politics at the Periphery, 33n.

25. Nanette Nofsinger, personal communication with author, East Lansing, Mich., 16 October 1992.

26. Mike Hughes, "Spin Docs at it Again Tonight," Lansing (Mich.) State Journal, 13 October 1992, 6D.

27. In the first intercoder-reliability check, observed agreement ranged from 76% for Field of Composition to 93% for Field of View Type. The coding instrument instructions were modified and expanded based on confusions noted in the first reliability check, and the instrument was retested using the second half of the first presidential debate. Observed agreement in the second reliability check was 94% for Shot Type, 94% for Camera Angle, 97% for Over-the-Shoulder From Whom, 99% for Over-the-Shoulder Toward Whom, 99% for Field of View Type, 97% for Oneshot of Whom, and 91% for Field of View Composition. Each coder coded the first 15 minutes of the debate a second time for an intracoder-reliablity test.

28. The complete codebook is available from the author.

29. An extreme close-up (ECU) showed only the head of the person; a close-up showed the head and shoulders; a medium close-up was cut at the bust; a medium shot was cut at the waist; a long shot showed the full body of the person featured.

30. Scott's pi was .92 for Shot Type, .89 for Camera Angle, .95 for Over-the-Shoulder Looking From, .96 for Over-the-Shoulder Looking To, .93 for Field of View Type, .93 for One-Shot Featuring Whom, and .88 for Field of View Composition.

31. R. F. Harney and Vernon A. Stone, "Television and Newspaper Front Page Coverage of a Major News Story," Journal of Broadcasting 13 (Spring 1969):181-188; Dan Nimmo and J. E. Combs, "'The Horror Tonight': Network Television News and Three Mile Island," Journal of Broadcasting 25 (Summer 1981):289-293; Dennis T. Lowry, "Gresham's Law and Network TV News Selection," Journal of Broadcasting 15 (Fall 1971):397-407; and Seltz and Yoakam, "Production Diary," 73-126.

32. J. Max Robins, "No Debate over ABC's Win," Variety, 19 October 1992, 39.

33. No statistical significance is reported because the analysis used the population of shots in the two debates and not a sample.

34. Note that 22.8% of all OTS shots looked over more than one person's shoulder, and 49.8% of all OTS shots looked toward more than one person. These shots are not included in the analysis presented in Table 4.

35. See Gerald Millerson, The Techniques of Television Production, 6th ed. (New York: Hastings House, 1968), 224, 264; Herbert Zettl, Sight Sound Motion: Applied Media Aesthetics, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1990), 214; and Herbert Zettl, Television Production Handbook, 5th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1992), 349.

TABLE 1

Percentages of all shots each candidate was included in for the second and third 1992 presidential debates*

Candidate Featured	ABC			PBS			Grand Total (N=1,888)
	2nd Debate (N=622)	3rd Debate (N=332)	Debate Total (N=954)	2nd Debate (N=601)	3rd Debate (N=333)	Debate Total (N=934)	
Bush	42.1	45.5	43.3	41.5	41.0	41.3	42.3
Clinton	36.9	36.0	36.6	37.0	34.1	36.0	36.3
Perot	36.7	34.1	35.7	38.1	35.1	37.0	36.4

*When more than one candidate appeared in a shot, the shot was counted for each candidate individually, so percentages add to more than 100%.

TABLE 2

Percentage of appearances in candidate oneshots in the second and third 1992 presidential debates*

Candidate Featured	ABC			PBS			Grand Total (N=823)
	2nd Debate (N=265)	3rd Debate (N=154)	Debate Total (N=419)	2nd Debate (N=246)	3rd Debate (N=158)	Debate Total (N=404)	
Bush	34.0	39.0	35.8	34.1	38.6	35.9	35.8
Clinton	29.8	26.0	28.4	28.9	26.6	28.0	28.2
Perot	36.2	35.1	35.8	37.0	34.8	36.1	36.0

*Candidate Oneshots showed the candidate alone.

TABLE 3

Percentages of appearances in multi-shots in the second and third 1992 presidential debates*

Candidate	ABC			PBS			Grand Total (N=1,348)
	2nd Debate (N=455)	3rd Debate (N=229)	Debate Total (N=684)	2nd Debate (N=454)	3rd Debate (N=210)	Debate Total (N=664)	
Bush	37.8	39.7	38.5	36.3	36.2	36.3	37.4
Clinton	33.2	34.5	33.6	33.3	34.3	33.6	33.6
Perot	29.0	25.8	27.9	30.4	29.5	30.1	29.0

*Multi-shots showed a candidate with at least one other person.

TABLE 4

Percentage of oneshot fields of view used for each candidate in the second and third 1992 presidential debates

			Field of View*				
			ECU	CU	MCU	MS	LS
ABC	2nd Debate (N=238)	Bush	2.3	38.4	54.7	3.5	1.2
		Clinton	4.5	48.5	40.9	6.1	0.0
		Perot	2.3	29.1	65.1	3.5	0.0
	3rd Debate (N=146)	Bush	0.0	1.8	91.2	7.0	0.0
		Clinton	0.0	7.9	89.5	2.6	0.0
		Perot	0.0	3.9	94.1	2.0	0.0
	Total (N=384)	Bush	1.4	23.8	69.2	4.9	0.7
		Clinton	2.9	33.7	58.7	4.8	0.0
		Perot	1.5	19.7	75.9	2.9	0.0
PBS	2nd Debate (N=224)	Bush	2.5	40.5	54.4	2.5	0.0
		Clinton	1.7	42.4	47.5	8.5	0.0
		Perot	0.0	31.4	67.4	1.2	0.0
	3rd Debate (N=150)	Bush	0.0	1.7	93.1	5.2	0.0
		Clinton	0.0	12.5	85.0	2.5	0.0
		Perot	0.0	3.8	94.2	1.9	0.0
	Total (N=374)	Bush	1.5	24.1	70.8	3.6	0.0
		Clinton	1.0	30.3	62.6	6.1	0.0
		Perot	0.0	21.0	77.5	1.4	0.0

*ECU = Extreme Close-Up, showing only the head of the candidate.
CU = Close-Up, showing the head and shoulders of the candidate.
MCU = Medium Close-Up, showing the candidate cut at the bust.
MS = Medium Shot, showing the candidate cut at the waist.
LS = Long Shot, showing the full body of the candidate.

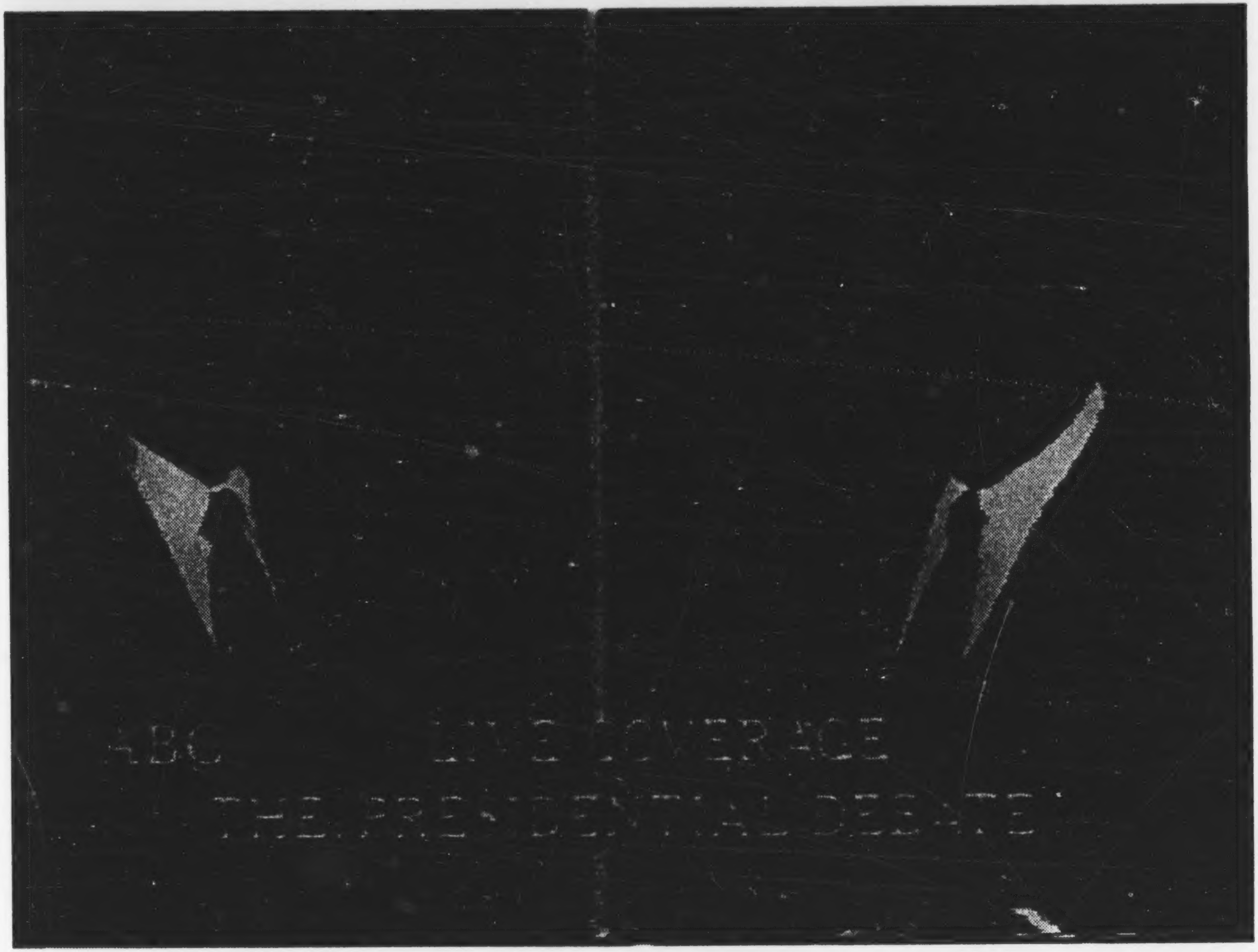
ABC LIVE COVERAGE
THE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

Fig. 1 Split-screen from ABC's coverage of the third 1992 presidential debate.

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Fig. 2 Two-shot from PBS's coverage of the third 1992 presidential debate.

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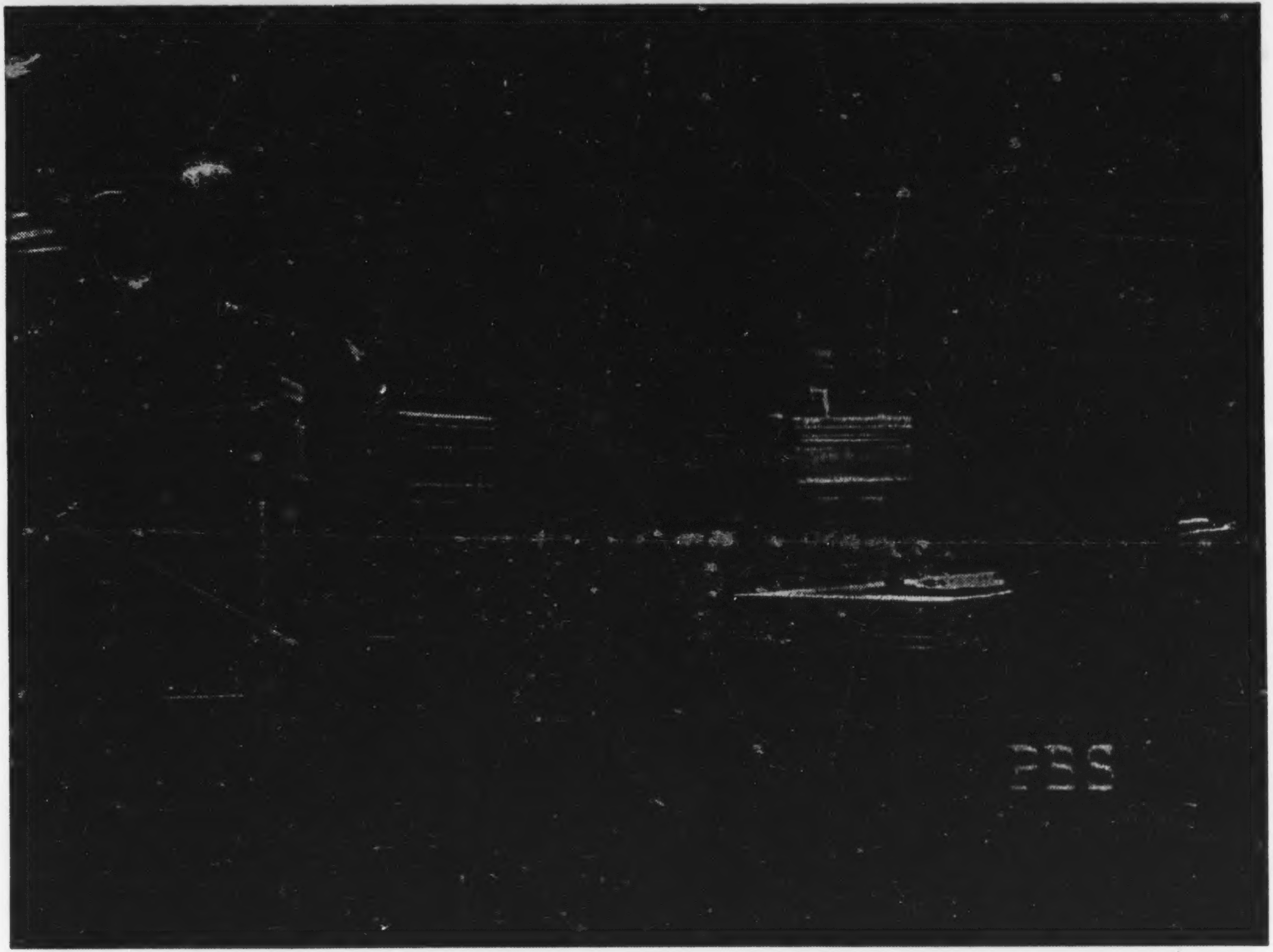

Fig. 3 Typical 3-shot from left side of stage from PBS's coverage of the third 1992 presidential debate.

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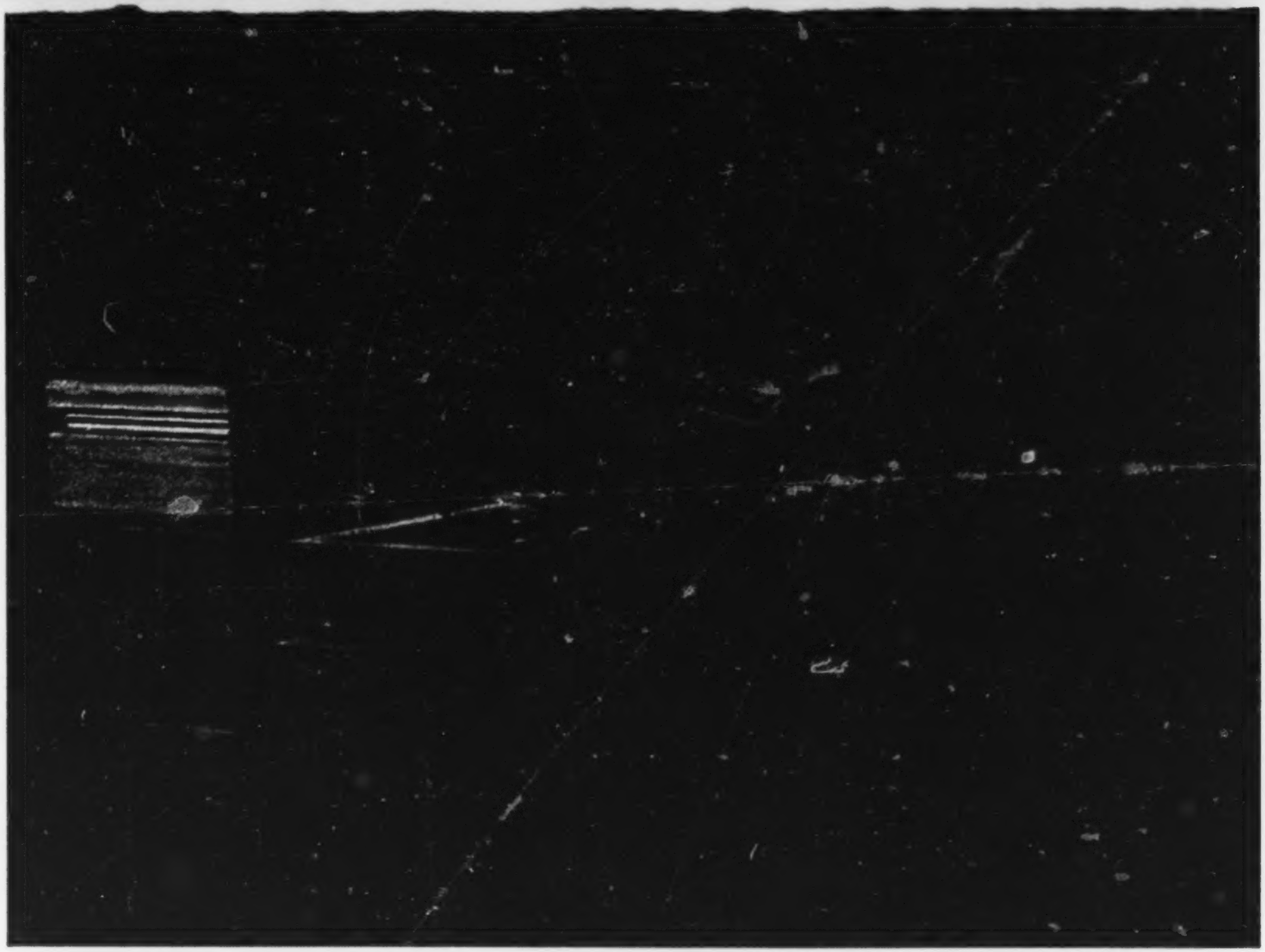

Fig. 4 Typical 3-shot from right side of stage from ABC's coverage of the third 1992 presidential debate.

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Conceptions of Salience:
Their Roles in Voters' Information-Processing of Issue Milieus

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Conceptions of Salience:
Their Roles in Voters' Information-Processing of Issue Milieus

Abstract

A study investigated the relation between individual conceptions of issue salience and decision-making strategies within systematically varied issue environments.

One hundred ninety-one military personnel were presented simulated newspaper articles about an election contest and asked to make a candidate choice. A single issue was altered between two issue milieus.

Analysis across the two issue environments using two measures of the decision-making process found that issues conceptualized as having *ethical salience* (related to ethical or moral values) were linked to the use of a non-compensatory strategy, which uses one or two key issues to simplify the decision-making process.

This relationship held even when the number of issues with *societal salience* (considered important because of consequences for self or society) was controlled.

Implications of these findings for political communication researchers are discussed.

Conceptions of Salience: Their Roles in Voters' Information-Processing of Issue Milieus[1]

Political communication studies have consistently found that media devote a majority of their election coverage to almost anything but candidate issue positions (Patterson & McClure, 1976; Patterson, 1980; Robinson & Sheehan, 1980; Robinson & Sheehan, 1983; Arterton, 1984; Buell, 1987). For example, in the 1988 presidential campaign, media extensively reported on the public opinion poll standings of the candidates, their personal characteristics, and the strategies and tactics of their managers, but scarcely provided coverage of genuine policy issues (Patterson, 1989; Hershey, 1989). For the same election season, Johnson (1993) found that 59 percent of preprimary and primary election stories by the three television networks and the New York *Times* and Chicago *Tribune* focused on the "horse race," while Buchanan (1991), in a comprehensive analysis of various broadcast and print media, found that 36 percent of campaign stories focused on the horse race, 21 percent on candidate conflicts, and less than 10 percent on policy issues.

In 1992, however, several news organizations attempted innovative approaches to campaign coverage. In North Carolina, the *Charlotte Observer* teamed with WSOC-TV and the Poynter Institute of St. Petersburg, Florida, to "help voters regain control of the issues" (Oppel, 1992); in Kansas, the *Wichita Eagle* worked jointly with local broadcasters to focus attention and clarify issues (Meyer, 1993); and in Minnesota, a *Minneapolis Star Tribune* series closely examined candidates' stands on campaign issues during the final months of the race. Similar "issue-oriented" coverage was attempted by many other news media (Dennis et al., 1993), echoing a sentiment raised at an American Society of Newspaper Editors conference in April 1992, where editors considered the need for newspapers to supply more substantive coverage of campaign issues (Gersh, 1992).

The media's increased focus on issues may lead to voting decisions based less on candidate images and more on issue positions, suggesting the need for research on the role of issues in electoral campaigns. Most research on issue voting behavior, however, has focused on factors influencing the selection of a specific candidate. Unfortunately, this approach fails to explore the process by which these decisions were reached and tends to be election-specific. Examination of the underlying decision-making processes utilized by voters when confronting issue information may shed light on voting behavior across elections. For example, what strategies are used to process issue information? How do individual conceptions of issues influence a voter's decision-making strategy? Do differing issues share common characteristics that lead to similar information-processing patterns? In an attempt to answer these questions, this research examined how differing conceptions of issue salience affect voters' decision-making strategies.

Review of Literature

Decision-making and Information-Processing. A great deal of behavioral and consumer research examines a *choice process*, in which a decision-maker often must decide between two or more alternatives using his or her cognitive capacity to process information, reduce conflict, and reach a decision (for example, Edwards, 1954; Biggs et al., 1985; Sheth & Newman, 1985; Tversky & Kahneman, 1986; Sundstrom, 1987; Hogarth, 1987; Slovic et al., 1988; Huber, 1989; Bazerman, 1990; Hogarth, 1990).

If one option dominates all other alternatives on attributes deemed important, the selection is relatively easy. Conflict often arises, however, when one option does not dominate across all attributes. In such situations, marketing researchers commonly assume that decisions are based upon the willingness to "trade off more of one valued attribute against less of another valued attribute" to determine which alternative has the greatest overall level of worth (Payne, Bettman & Johnson, 1992). In this *compensatory* model positive and negative data on several attributes can balance, offset, or "compensate" one another (Bettman, 1979; Billings & Marcus, 1983; Goldstein, 1990; Beattie & Baron, 1991). This model -- with its weighting and summing of attributes -- shares some theoretical commonality with the spatial theory of voting, the central model of electoral choice for the past four decades (Hinich & Pollard, 1981; Herstein, 1981).[2]

Both the compensatory model and spatial theory, however, have been criticized (Stokes, 1963; Wilkie & Pessemier, 1973; Rabinowitz, 1978; Onken, Hastie and Revelle, 1985; Rabinowitz & Macdonald, 1989; Payne, Bettman and Johnson, 1990), in part because of their assumptions of highly calculative decision-makers. Hence, *non-compensatory* strategies have also been theorized, in which a positive evaluation on one attribute cannot compensate for a negative evaluation on another; therefore, "trade-offs may not be made explicitly in many cases" and an overall level of worth may not be calculated (Payne, Bettman & Johnson, 1992; see also Klayman, 1985; Tversky et al., 1988).[3]

Therefore, research has identified a number of strategies used by decision-makers,[4] most of which fall under the broad rubrics of either compensatory or non-compensatory processing (see Wright, 1975; Wright & Barbour, 1975; Payne, 1982; MacGregor & Slovic, 1986; Jarvenpaa, 1989; Johnson et al., 1989; Jarvenpaa, 1990). Two characteristics are common to most: 1) processing of information is either from attribute to attribute across alternatives, or from alternative to alternative across attributes; 2) processing includes all relevant information (i.e., compensatory) or only some (i.e., non-compensatory), suggesting that the decision-making process may not be purely compensatory or non-compensatory but somewhere along a continuum between these strategies.

Much of contemporary research on information-processing reflects a basic grounding in schema theory. Schema theory posits that, based on experience, people organize their perceptions of the environment into cognitive knowledge structures, actively constructing reality (Fiske & Kinder, 1981; Miller, Wattenberg & Malanchuk, 1985; Graber, 1988). These schemas "facilitate top-down or conceptually driven processing" (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). Hamill, Lodge and Blake (1985) draw a distinction between information -- facts, figures, beliefs, impressions -- and knowledge, the "kernels" of thought in which information is stored. How information is structured in memory determines understanding. Schemata, once activated, serve to continually process information, providing the individual with meaning and understanding (Markus & Zajonc, 1985).

Miller (1991) advocates the application of information-processing concepts to the study of political phenomena because they "provide a different view of political cognitions from those presented by previous theories." A number of studies drawing from schema theory have examined the relationship between cognitive strategies used to process issue information communicated by news media and various psychological factors, such as affective state or political expertise (Isen & Means, 1983; Fiske, Kinder & Larter, 1983; Isen & Diamond, 1989; Nimmo, 1990; Hsu & Price, 1993). Further, theorists also have argued that "schematics" (i.e., people with relative expertise) more easily encode and organize incoming political information in terms of previously formed concepts than "aschematics," political novices (Sniderman, Glasser & Griffin, 1990). There exists a dearth of research, however, on the relationship between individual conceptions of issue salience and information-processing in decision-making.

Issue Salience and Conception. Issue salience, while accepted as an integral factor in the voting process, has received less attention in political communication research than candidate image or political party affiliation; further, studies on the role of issues have produced conflicting findings.[5]

The majority of election studies have found that candidate images have the largest influence on the voting decision, and that concern with issues is not likely to play a prominent role in electoral choice (Berelson, Lazarsfeld & McPhee, 1954; Campbell et al., 1960; Marshall, 1983; Miller, Wattenberg & Malanchuk, 1985; Norrander, 1986).

Key (1966), however, suggested that issues are more important than previously indicated, and Stokes and DiIulio (1993) argue for a broader conception of issue voting that includes "valence issues," on which all candidates agree.[6] Moreover, a number of studies have found issue salience to be an important predictor of voting behavior (Shapiro, 1969; Brody & Page, 1972; Kirkpatrick & Jones, 1974; Rabinowitz, 1978; Young & Borgida, 1984; Niemi & Bartels, 1985; Boyd, 1986).

For example, a study by RePass (1971) on the 1960 and 1964 presidential elections concluded that salient issues had almost as much weight as party identification in predicting voting choice. Similarly, research by Rabinowitz, Prothro and Jacoby (1982) on the 1964 and 1968 campaigns found voters reported a number of salient issues, with the conclusion that "on the individual level, any issue singled out as personally most important plays a substantially greater role for those who so view it than it does for others."

Carmines and Stimson (1980) made a distinction between "hard issue" and "soft issue" voting. Hard issue voting results from the rational weighing of alternatives, and requires cognitive and conceptual skills to make such comparative assessments. Soft issue voting occurs for issues that are largely symbolic rather than technical -- policy ends rather than means -- allowing voters to process these issues at a gut level.

Further, a number of studies have found that "social-moral issues" -- such as abortion, homosexuality, pornography, and school prayer -- have symbolic importance for individuals who wish to assert their values to the broader community (Page & Clelland, 1978; Lorentzen, 1980; Ginsberg, 1984; Luker, 1984; Moen, 1984). Wuthnow (1988, 1989) argues that a number of contemporary issues grow out of differing moral or ethical viewpoints, and he speculates that many future political conflicts will be moral- or value-based. While others (Klein, 1984; Warner, 1988; Olson & Carroll, 1992) disagree as to the extent of potential cleavage, they agree that social-moral issues will serve as critical areas of political conflict.

That media play a key role in increasing salience for certain issues has been a consistent finding in agenda-setting studies (for example, see McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Becker, 1977; Weaver et al., 1981; Einsiedel, Salomone & Schneider, 1984; Brosius & Kepplinger, 1990), especially "unobtrusive" issues, which do not directly affect individuals (Yagade & Dozier, 1990; LaSorsa & Wanta, 1990; Watt, Mazza & Snyder, 1993). Research on the 1990 Texas gubernatorial race suggested that the "agenda-setting function may occur in a two-step process -- from transfer of mass media salience to the public mind, then from public salience to behavioral outcome" (Roberts, 1992).

Further, theorists have argued that media frames of issues are linked to individual assessments of their salience (Goffman, 1974; Tuchman, 1978). According to Bateson (1972), a media frame orders or organizes the perception of the receiver by including and excluding certain messages, while Gitlin (1980) adds that "media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports." Similarly, Graber (1989) and Rachlin (1988) argue that a journalist's choice of content and frame shape an issue's reality for audience members.

Extending this concept beyond its grounding in critical theory, Tankard et al. (1991) define a media frame as "a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration." For example, using an inductive approach, Tankard and colleagues examined and identified differing media frames for the issue of abortion, while previously Gamson and Modigliani (1989) considered the different frames attached to the issue of nuclear power and Swenson (1990) coded eight framing elements of abortion stories. Implicit to these studies is the perspective that media frames effectively control the criteria that "create the meaning (or acceptable range of meaning) of an issue" (Ball-Rokeach and Rokeach, 1987). However, Gamson et al. (1992) argue that, regardless of how encoded a received reality is, individuals "may decode it in different ways" and that a framed message is "not a leaden reality to which we all inevitably must yield," suggesting that along with considering the media frames of issues, researchers should examine individual processing and conception of these messages.

However, the different ways in which an issue can be conceptualized by individuals, and the impact of these conceptions on their decision-making processes, has remained under explored. Therefore, of particular interest to this study is a meta-analysis by Johnson and Eagly (1989) of thirty-eight studies that examined the effect of involvement on persuasion; the authors found different effects depending upon whether individuals were involved based upon values, personal consequences, or image concerns. Although others (Petty & Cacioppo, 1990) disagree with these distinctions, Johnson and Eagly (1990), in evaluating the differing ways that individuals may approach information, argue that the particular "aspect of the self-concept that is activated" markedly influences an individual's information-processing.

Further, Domke and Shah (1993), in research during the 1992 election season, suggested that the type of salience attached to issues differs substantially and that these distinctions affect voter decision-making: An issue linked to personal values may serve as a critical factor in the voting process, while an issue considered important but with less personal linkage often acts as only one of a number of influences on a voting decision. The authors concluded that the *type of psychological linkage* a person has with an issue may significantly influence the decision-making strategy.

This research, however, has clear weaknesses. First, the theorized relationship was deduced from a partially supported hypothesis, and therefore was not systematically tested. Second, the study categorized issues as having particular types of salience for specific sub-populations without examination of how voters conceptualized the issues. As Gamson et al. (1992) argue, individuals do not automatically internalize the public frame of issues. Since each individual has a unique combination of values, interests and priorities, it seems necessary to examine whether both an issue's media frame and its individual conception are related to the decision-making strategy.

Hypotheses

Much of the decision-making literature, then, suggests that when an individual considers a number of attributes (i.e., issues) important, he or she is likely to use a compensatory strategy. A contrasting perspective, suggested by Johnson and Eagly (1989, 1990) and Domke and Shah (1993), is that issues related to personal values play a critical role in an individual's decision-making process. We propose, further, that voters may have *differing conceptions of an issue's salience* based on the activation of different types of values. Therefore, we posit that issues may be ascribed salience based upon societal values or ethical values. Issues conceived as having *ethical salience* are closely linked to an individual's concerns for human rights, civil rights, religious morals or personal ethics. Issues conceived as having *societal salience* are closely linked to an individual's concerns for his or her situation in society or for the health of society at large.

The present study attempts to link these differing types of issue salience to the decision-making strategies utilized by voters. Individuals who consider issues important because of societal concerns are likely to focus on the interplay of various issues on society, and by extension, on their personal life-situation, in order to calculate the overall worth of a candidate. Thus, such individuals would seem unlikely to view a single issue in isolation; rather, they would consider, in conjunction, a number of issues that impact society and their position in it. It is likely, then, that issues framed as having societal salience compete fairly equally in the mind of the voter and lead to more extensive, or compensatory, information-processing. Accordingly, we now state the first research hypothesis:

> **H1:** *Individuals who report as important in their voting decision issues framed as having societal salience will be more likely to use a compensatory decision-making strategy than individuals who report as important issues framed as having ethical salience.*

Conversely, as stated earlier, individuals are active processors and may conceive of an issue differently than the manner in which it has been framed; therefore, personal conceptions of issue salience should be examined. It seems likely that individuals who find a particular issue as having ethical salience place that issue at the center of their assessment of the issue environment, since a person's sense of ethical or moral values, central to an individual's identity, must first be satisfied before considering other candidate information. When an individual's conception of an issue enters this domain of salience, it seems likely that the issue will be assessed separately from issues with societal salience. Issues ascribed ethical salience, then, likely become central to a filtering process whereby candidate information regarding such issues must be processed first. Therefore, in evaluating an issue environment, voters are likely to use an issue assigned ethical salience, if present, to guide their decision-making process: candidates who do not share their ethical position may be eliminated or, in a more simplified approach, the vote may be determined solely by that issue. Accordingly, we now state the second research hypothesis:

> **H2:** *Individuals who conceptualize an issue environment as having ethical salience will be more likely to use a non-compensatory decision-making strategy than individuals who conceptualize an issue environment as having societal salience.*

Since individuals have different levels of interest and involvement in voting decisions, it also is useful to examine combinations of both the type of salience attached to issues and the number of issues considered salient, and to observe how these combinations affect a voter's decision-making strategy. Clearly, individuals may attach distinct types of salience to different issues within the issue environment; further, individuals may find any number of issues to have ethical salience or societal salience. Nonetheless, because of the centrality of issues conceived as having ethical salience, it seems likely that such issues would still direct information-processing toward a non-compensatory strategy, regardless of the number of issues conceived as having societal salience. Accordingly, we now state our final hypothesis:

> **H3:** *Individuals who conceptualize an issue as having ethical salience will be more likely to use a non-compensatory decision-making strategy than individuals who do not conceptualize an issue as having ethical salience, regardless of the number of issues conceptualized as having societal salience.*

Method

Copies of newspaper articles and a questionnaire were administered to 191 active-duty and reserve naval military personnel at Fort Snelling in Minneapolis-St.

Paul, MN. Eighty-five percent of subjects were men and ages ranged relatively evenly between 18 and 54.[7] Thirteen percent of subjects were high school graduates, 33 percent attended some college but did not graduate, 28 percent graduated college, and 24 percent had some graduate education. Respondents took 35-45 minutes to complete the materials.

Research Design. At the center of this research is the controlled presentation of issue environments. The study design contained three candidates and four issues. A single issue with ethical dimensions was altered between two subject groups: one group received an article on the issue of abortion, the other received an article on the issue of gays in the military. Both groups also received articles on the issues of economy, education and health care.[8]

As suggested by previous research (for example, Luker, 1984; Wuthnow, 1988; Swenson, 1990; Tankard et al., 1991), abortion and gays in the military were expected to be ascribed ethical salience because both have been framed predominantly in the public arena as issues of rights and morals. However, there are some differences between these two issues: Abortion has been an issue of considerable importance for some time, whereas gays in the military has come only recently to the political forefront; conversely, the issue of gays in the military was expected to have greater salience to many in the subject population. Both issues, however, were expected to have considerable impact on the person's processing of information in the issue environment. Each of the three remaining issues, economy, education and health care, were expected to be ascribed societal salience because they have been framed in the public arena as issues that impact an individual's situation in society as well as society as a whole.

The combination of three candidates and four issues was chosen in an effort to balance concerns about information overload with the ability to distinguish decision-making strategies. More information likely would have led to overload, and fewer candidates or issues would have made it more difficult to differentiate compensatory or non-compensatory strategies.

A former professional journalist wrote articles for a political campaign.[9] In the articles, a number of possible confounding variables (e.g., political party affiliation, gender bias and subject familiarity with candidates) were controlled.[10] Two steps were taken to ensure that no candidate or issue received greater prominence: 1) Order of issue articles was randomized; 2) Candidate positions within the articles (i.e., left to right) were rotated.

Questionnaire. After reading the articles, subjects completed a questionnaire about their voting process. Definitions for the decision-making strategies[11] were developed: In a compensatory process, individuals weigh candidates' stands on each relevant issue in order to calculate which candidate, overall, is the best option. In a non-compensatory process, individuals initially focus on one or two issues, which are used to either make the voting decision or to narrow the field of candidates; thereafter, additional information may be considered.

Two very different approaches were used to measure the dependent variable, decision-making strategy. The first measure was a series of open-ended questions asking subjects to describe their decision-making process. Responses were content analyzed, based on the operational definitions of decision-making strategies.[12] Fifteen subjects did not answer these questions or provided responses that could not be coded; of the remaining 176 respondents, two coders agreed on 157 as compensatory or non-compensatory, yielding an inter-coder reliability coefficient of .89. Using the formula for Scott's pi, which corrects for agreement by chance, inter-coder reliability was determined to be 78 percent greater than by chance.[13] The remaining 19 responses were discussed and then classified. Note that 58 percent of subjects receiving the issue of gays in the military were coded as compensatory, compared to 62 percent of subjects receiving the issue of abortion.

The second dependent measure contained nine statements corresponding to compensatory and non-compensatory strategies, designed to build a "decision-making strategy" index. For each statement, subjects were asked to rate their level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." This index attempted to address the possibility of mixed models or use of different models at different stages in the decision-making process.

Following data collection, factor analysis was performed on these statements. A confirmatory forced one-factor solution was computed because previous research (Wright & Barbour, 1975; Bettman, 1979; Hogarth, 1987; Domke & Shah, 1993) suggested a conceptualization of compensatory and non-compensatory decision-making strategies along a one-dimensional continuum. If so, compensatory and non-compensatory statements should have inverse loadings (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

As predicted, the four compensatory items loaded strongly negatively and the five non-compensatory items loaded strongly positively, supporting the conceptualization of decision-making strategies as one-dimensional. The factor analysis accounted for 44.6 percent of variance in the index. The responses to the compensatory items were then reverse-coded and used to build an additive decision strategy index; this method of subject score construction was chosen over factor scores due to the consistent factor loadings, .59 to .74. The index, with mean inter-item correlations of .375, had a Cronbach's alpha of .84.

Among individuals receiving the issue of gays in the military, the index had a .56 correlation with the open-ended decision-making measure; for individuals receiving the issue of abortion, the index had a .59 correlation with the open-ended decision-making measure.[14] The strength of these correlations increased confidence that the dependent variables tapped a similar construct; conversely, that the correlations were not stronger also suggests that the dependent measures, in part, tapped different aspects of the construct.

The next measures focused on the importance of issues in the candidate choice. Subjects were asked to rate the importance on their voting decision of four issues: abortion or gays in the military, economy, education, and health care. For each, a seven-point scale was used, ranging from "not at all important" to "extremely important."

Individual conceptions of issue salience were measured by a pair of open-ended questions asking subjects to explain which issues were important and the manner in which they were salient. Operational definitions then guided the coding. Each issue was coded as having ethical salience, societal salience, or as having not been mentioned/ignored. Issues were coded as having ethical salience if the individual explicitly discussed the issue within the framework of human rights, civil rights, religious morals or personal ethics. Issues were coded as having societal salience if the individual discussed the implications of the issue for society at large or for society's future well-being; or if the individual indicated the issue had a direct impact on his or her current life-situation in society, or the current life-situation of someone close. Responses indicating that issues had components of both ethical salience and societal salience were carefully analyzed to assess which type of salience had received greater emphasis, and then coded.

Fourteen subjects did not answer these questions or failed to provide enough information to reliably code; for the remaining 177 respondents, two coders agreed on 641 of 708 individual-issue codings of ethical salience, societal salience, or not mentioned/ignored, producing an inter-coder reliability coefficient of .91. Using Scott's pi, inter-coder reliability was determined to be 86 percent greater than by chance. The remaining 67 individual-issue codings were discussed and classified.

These individual-issue codings were then combined to create the variable of overall conceptions of the issue environments. As guided by our theory, individuals who attached ethical salience to at least one issue were coded as having an ethical conception of the overall issue environment. Individuals who did not attach ethical salience to any issues but did consider issues to have societal salience were coded as having a societal conception of the overall issue environment. Note that 36 percent of subjects in the group receiving the issue of gays in the military had an ethical conception of overall salience, compared to 43 percent in the group receiving the issue of abortion.

Finally, subjects were asked a number of demographic questions, including gender, age, military status, political party affiliation and media use.

Results

The study's design allowed for the replication of hypotheses tests across two sets of subjects with differing issue environments using two differently measured dependent variables.

Hypothesis One. The first hypothesis predicted that individuals who reported as important issues framed as having societal salience (i.e., economy, education and health care) were significantly more likely to use a compensatory strategy than individuals who reported as important issues framed as having ethical salience (i.e., gays in the military or abortion). It received strong support.

For the first test of hypothesis one, correlations were run separately for each subject group between the reported importance of the issues and the decision-making strategy index (see Table 2).

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

As predicted, in both groups the reported importance of each of the issues framed as having societal salience, economy, education and health care, was significantly related to the use of a compensatory strategy. In addition, it appears these three issues clustered together in individual evaluations of the issue environments: In both subject groups, economy, education and health care were significantly positively correlated, while none of the three was clearly correlated with either gays in the military or abortion.

For a second test of hypothesis one, multiple regressions were run separately for each group with the issue-importance scales as the independent variables and the open-ended decision-making strategy measure as the dependent variable (compensatory=0, non-compensatory=1).[15] The independent variables were entered simultaneously (see Table 3).

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

As predicted, individuals who reported as important issues framed as having societal salience (i.e., economy, education and health care) were more likely to use a compensatory strategy than individuals who reported as important issues framed as having ethical salience (i.e., gays in the military or abortion). The results, however, were statistically significant for only one issue framed as having societal salience in each subject group: health care for subjects receiving the issue of gays in the military, and economy for subjects receiving the issue of abortion.[16]

These results also shed further light on hypothesis one. Notably, using the open-ended measure as the dependent variable, the reported importance of each issue framed as having ethical salience (i.e., gays in the military and abortion) was significantly related to a non-compensatory strategy. This relationship was not found in Table 2, which seems to indicate an inconsistency in the decision-making strategy measures; however, the strong correlations between dependent variables (.56 and .59 for the two issue environments) suggest that the open-ended measure of decision-making process produced responses that allowed for finer examination of the differences between compensatory and non-compensatory strategies.[17]

Furthermore, use of the issue-importance scales as the independent variables assumes that individual views of gays in the military and abortion match dominant public frames of these issues as having ethical salience; as stated earlier, this may not be the case. Individuals may have contrasting conceptions of the salience of these issues, which may lead to the use of different decision-making strategies. To examine how individuals conceptualized each issue, frequencies were run for both research groups (see Table 4).

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

These results indicate that individuals do not automatically adopt the dominant frames of issues. While the large majority of subjects conceived of economy, education and health care as having societal salience -- thus matching their frames -- far fewer subjects matched the frames of gays in the military and abortion as having ethical salience. Only 28 percent of subjects receiving the issue conceptualized gays in the military as having ethical salience, while 42 percent of subjects receiving the issue conceptualized abortion as having ethical salience.

More subjects likely found abortion to have ethical salience because it has been prominent in the public debate for 20 years, fostering a deeply held belief for many individuals. In contrast, the issue of gays in the military has only recently come to the fore and, though having ethical dimensions, also has been publicly debated as important due to its impact on the lives of military personnel or for its impact on the readiness of military to defend American society.[18]

Nonetheless, although the percentages differ between subject groups, these results suggest that the theoretical construct "ethical salience" can be tapped by different issues in dissimilar issue environments. Further, it seems likely that, regardless of issue milieu, an ethical conception of issues -- due to their centrality to moral or ethical values -- will lead individuals to use a non-compensatory decision-making strategy based heavily on these issues. Hypotheses two and three test this theorized relationship.

Hypothesis Two. The second hypothesis also received strong support. It predicted that individuals who conceptualize an issue environment as having ethical salience will be more likely to use a non-compensatory strategy than individuals who conceptualize an issue environment as having societal salience.

As a first test of hypothesis two, crosstabs for each research group were run between individual conceptions of the issue environment and the decision-making strategy described in the open-ended measure (see Table 5).

TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

As predicted, subjects who found an issue milieu to have ethical salience were significantly more likely to use a non-compensatory strategy than subjects who found the same issue milieu to have societal salience. These results were consistent across both research groups.

For a second test of hypothesis two, t-tests were run, with the decision-making strategy index as the dependent variable, to compare the means of subjects who found the issues to have societal salience and subjects who found the issues to have ethical salience (see Table 6).

TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

As predicted, individuals who conceptualized an issue milieu as having ethical salience were significantly more likely to use a non-compensatory strategy than individuals who found the same issue milieu to have societal salience. It is interesting to note that the difference in mean index scores was much larger for subjects receiving the issue of abortion than for subjects receiving the issue of gays in the military, though both easily achieved statistical significance. This disparity is consistent with the view that individuals attach greater ethical weight to abortion because of its prominence for the past two decades; thus, for those who view the issues ethically, abortion has more influence on the decision-making process than gays in the military.

Hypothesis Three. Having gained a better understanding of the relation between individual conceptions of issue environments and the voting decision-making process, it is useful to determine whether the presence of ethical salience will lead individuals to use a non-compensatory strategy regardless of the number of issues ascribed societal salience.

To test this relationship, a conceptual typology of the type of salience attached to issues and the number of issues considered salient was constructed from the open-ended individual-issue codings. To examine the number of issues conceived as having ethical salience and societal salience, frequencies were run for both subject groups (see Table 7).

TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

For each group, the "ethical" typology element was created by separating subjects with at least 1 issue ascribed ethical salience from those with no such issues; the "societal" typology element was created by separating subjects with 2 or more issues ascribed societal salience from those with fewer such issues. These splits were guided by two rationale. First, they distinguished between multi-issue voters and few-issue voters. Second, they placed fairly high numbers of subjects in each typology category.

Hypothesis three -- that individuals who conceptualize at least one issue as having ethical salience will be more likely to use a non-compensatory strategy than individuals who found no issues to have ethical salience, regardless of the number of issues found to have societal salience -- received strong support: Subjects in the typology's two categories with ethical salience were most likely to use a non-compensatory strategy, regardless of how many issues were ascribed societal salience.

For the first test of hypothesis three, crosstabs were run between the conceptual typology and the open-ended decision-making strategy measure for both subject groups (see Table 8).

TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE

As predicted, subjects with an ethical conception of at least one issue were significantly more likely to use a non-compensatory strategy than subjects without an ethical conception of an issue, even when controlling for the number of issues with societal conceptions. This relationship was found across both research groups.

Hypothesis three also was tested by running multiple regressions for each group with the decision-making strategy index as the dependent variable. The independent variables, number of issues conceived as having a) ethical salience and b) societal salience, were dummy-coded and entered simultaneously (see Table 9).

TABLE 9 ABOUT HERE

These results, consistent with those in Table 8, indicate that regardless of the number of salient issues, if one is ascribed an ethical conception individuals will process less information in making a voting decision than if no issues are assigned ethical salience. Two additional points are noteworthy. First, consistent with earlier findings, the beta weights indicate that the ethical salience attached to abortion had greater influence on the decision-making process than the ethical salience attached to gays in the military. Second, the beta weights indicate that the presence of ethical salience had much greater impact on the decision-making strategy than the number of issues with societal salience. This relationship was found in both subject groups.

As a point of comparison, the mean decision-making strategy index scores of subjects in the conceptual typology were calculated (see Table 10).

TABLE 10 ABOUT HERE

Using the percentages of individuals who indicated the use of a non-compensatory strategy in the dependent variables, Figures 1-4 provide graphical plots of these results.

FIGURES 1-4 ABOUT HERE

The diagonal lines, essentially parallel for the two levels of societal salience in three of four graphs (and close in the fourth), strongly support the prediction that individuals who conceptualize at least one issue as having ethical salience are significantly more likely to use a non-compensatory strategy than individuals who do not conceptualize an issue as having ethical salience, regardless of the number of issues ascribed societal salience.[19]

Discussion

The findings reported here are consistent across two sets of subjects exposed to differing issue environments, and are replicated with two different measures of the decision-making process. These results strongly support the perspective that the type of salience attached to an issue has a significant impact on the decision-making strategy. Further, while the predominant frames of issues certainly factor into the process, an individual's conception of an issue or a set of issues appears to have more influence on the decision-making strategy employed. The findings across hypotheses two and three clearly demonstrate that a conception of ethical salience is strongly related to the use of a non-compensatory strategy.

Voters who conceptualize an issue as having ethical salience, then, appear likely to place that issue at the center of their evaluation of the issue environment, where their stand on the issue functions as a filter through which candidate information must first be processed. It appears that when an issue enters this ethical domain of salience, voters must satisfy their moral or ethical values before processing other information, if any is considered at all. This is consistent with the view that an individual's self-concept plays a critical role in their processing of information. Thus, the entrance of another salient issue into an issue environment does not automatically mean more information will be evaluated; in contrast, if individuals view the new issue in an ethical manner, the amount of information processed may actually drop and the decision-making strategy may be simplified.

What is most convincing about these findings is their consistency across two issue milieus. In both subject groups, the same underlying theoretical relationship was observed, suggesting that "ethical salience" can be ascribed to different issues in dissimilar issue environments. By shifting the issues of gays in the military and abortion, the dynamics of the voting environment were altered. As noted earlier, abortion was assigned ethical salience for a greater percentage of individuals than gays in the military (42 percent to 28 percent, respectively). This is most likely due to the almost purely moral debate surrounding abortion for the past 20 years; in contrast, gays in the military, at least for this study's sample population of military personnel, was interpreted as salient due to a number of societal and situational, in addition to ethical, concerns.

These findings also indicate that, for individuals not conceptualizing any issue as having ethical salience, there is no filtering process; instead, issues ascribed societal salience compete in a more compensatory manner. In these circumstances, since all issues exist within the same conceptual domain of salience, there is no single issue on which a voter is willing to base much of his or her decision. When an issue enters the "higher" domain of ethical salience, however, a non-compensatory decision-making process becomes likely.

Implications for Future Research. The theoretical relationship suggested by these findings has broad implications. Elections have varying issue milieus, and understanding the effect of issue conception on decision-making strategies may shed light on how individual voters process issue information in making voting decisions. The findings suggest that voters do not views issues in isolation but rather as part of the broader environment of issues: Their processing is bound by the types of salience attached to the issues found within the issue milieu. On this basis, a number of research possibilities deserve further exploration.

Future studies might systematically vary the issue milieu to better understand voter decision-making processes. The findings of this study suggest that in political campaigns which lack issues with the potential to be ascribed ethical salience, the issues will compete on a relatively level playing field. Researchers may create milieus containing only issues likely to be assigned societal salience, such as economy, foreign policy, infrastructure spending, and deficit reduction, to examine if most voters use a compensatory strategy under such circumstances.

On the other extreme, researchers could also create voting environments in which potential ethical issues besides abortion and homosexuality are examined. For example, the issue of affirmative action may be conceived as having ethical salience by disadvantaged minorities. Similarly, firearm owners may assign ethical salience to the issue of gun control, while evangelical Christians may do the same with school prayer and pornography. The results of this study suggest that non-compensatory decision-making strategies would be likely to be employed when voters conceive of such issues as ethically salient. Experiments involving specific sub-groups would allow the theoretical relationship to be tested within different issue environments.

Researchers may also wish to examine whether domains of salience exist in addition to societal and ethical conceptions, or whether finer distinctions can be made within these. A possibility raised by the open-ended responses in this study is *situational salience,* which may be attached to issues with a direct and immediate impact on an individual but with little relation to broader societal concerns. Such situational salience would seem to be more personal than societal salience but less personal than ethical salience. Research might explore whether the entrance of an issue into this salience domain would result in the use of a non-compensatory decision-making strategy.

At the center of all these proposed areas of research is the critical question of process, the decision-making strategy used by the voter in making an electoral choice. Understanding the voter's process of decision-making in relation to the set of issues -- particularly his or her conceptions of those issues -- provides an under-explored approach to the examination of political communication effects. Most studies focus only on outcomes of media use, not on the process linking exposure and effect. This research suggests that this area clearly deserves greater exploration.

Notes

1. The authors wish to thank the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities School of Journalism and Mass Communication for funding this research, professor Daniel Wackman for encouragement, comments, and suggestions, and the Minneapolis-St. Paul Naval Reservists for their willingness to participate in this study.

2. According to the spatial theory of voting, candidates are perceived as points in a multi-dimensional space. Along each issue dimension voters must compute the distance between their position and each candidate's position. These issue "distances" are weighed and summed to produce an overall measure of distance between voter and candidate, and the candidate found to be closest to the voter is chosen.

3. Two primary types of non-compensatory strategies have been theorized: *conjunctive* and *lexicographic* (Wright & Barbour, 1975). In the conjunctive strategy, individuals have certain minimum standards on issues considered important. To remain in consideration, candidates must meet these minimum standards; if they fail to do so, they are eliminated. The decision is based on which candidate remains, or is the best among remaining choices. In the lexicographic strategy, individuals compare candidates on one issue considered most important. The candidate that is closest to the subject's belief on that issue is chosen. If candidates tie, they are compared on the next most-important issue.

4. Affect-referral, a decision-making strategy that is neither compensatory nor non-compensatory, has also been theorized. In this strategy, an individual makes a decision based primarily on an affective feeling about the various alternatives or attributes, of which he or she has previous information. See Wright and Barbour (1975) for a comprehensive explanation of affect-referral. For reasons discussed in the method section, the present research did not examine the strategy of affect-referral.

5. For an excellent overview of literature in this area, see Herbert B. Asher (1992), Presidential Elections & American Politics (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing).

6. On valence issues, since all candidates agree on the desired end result -- such as a strong economy, reduced crime and no corruption -- voters make their choice based on the perceived competency of the candidates to achieve these goals.

7. Although a high percentage of the sample subjects were men, the concern of the study is not to generalize to the public but rather to test the validity of the theorized relationship within a specific sub-population. Thus, issues of internal validity are of greater concern than external validity at this stage of the research. Furthermore, the sample subjects were selected, in part, because elements of the design (i.e., the inclusion of the issue of gays in the military) were considered relevant to them.

8. To clarify, then: 92 subjects received articles on health care, education, economy, and abortion; 99 subjects received articles on health care, education, economy, and gays in the military.

9. The writer of the articles has been a staff writer for the *Atlanta Journal & Constitution* and *Orange County Register*, in addition to four other papers.

10. The candidates' positions were composites or variations of actual political stances, taken from several campaigns. The fictitious candidates were male and were competing for the Democratic nomination in a Congressional District primary in a nearby state, a political sphere likely to be unknown among the subjects. All of the articles were given female bylines. To avoid presenting subjects with too much information, for each issue two of the three candidates held the same position, with each candidate in disagreement once, except on the issues of abortion and gays in the military. On those two issues, there were mild differences between the two candidates in agreement. For abortion, the candidates held the following views: 1) anti-abortion; 2) politically pro-choice but personally anti-

abortion; 3) politically and personally pro-choice. For gays in the military, the candidates held the following views: 1) anti-gays in military; 2) moderately in favor of repealing the ban on gays; 3) strongly in favor of repealing the ban.

11. The affect-referral decision-making strategy was not addressed in this research because subjects previously were unfamiliar with the candidates' stands on the four issues, while other possible affect-referral attributes were randomized or controlled (i.e., party affiliation, age, education, gender). For this research, then, the possibility of affect referral was minimized.

12. Responses were coded as compensatory if the subject seemed to weigh each issue position without quickly eliminating a candidate due to his stand on an issue deemed salient. Subjects were coded as non-compensatory if they eliminated a candidate early in the information-processing, after which information regarding that candidate was no longer considered; if there was mention of a minimum standard or litmus test that each candidate must meet to remain in consideration; or if only one issue was clearly predominant in the decision-making process. In the few cases where none of these responses were present (e.g., only a few issues mentioned as salient and no candidate was quickly eliminated), the responses were carefully analyzed to determine if greater weight was placed on one particular issue early in the decision-making process. If so, the subject was coded as non-compensatory.

13. The coefficient of inter-coder agreement was determined by taking the number of coding decisions agreed upon and dividing it by the total number of coding decisions made. The formula for computing Scott's pi is percent observed agreement minus percent expected agreement, divided by one minus the percent expected agreement. See Scott (1955).

14. Individuals receiving the issue of gays in the military had a mean index score of 23.3, with a range from 9 (strongly compensatory) to 44 (strongly non-compensatory). For these subjects, the standard deviation was 7.05 and there was a positive skew of .340. For individuals receiving the issue of abortion, the mean index score was 23.6 with a range from 9 to 45. For these subjects, the standard deviation was 7.90 and there was a positive skew of .404.

15. Although the dependent variable, the open-ended decision-making measure, was a dichotomous variable, linear regressions were run in order to examine more closely the beta weights -- particularly their direction -- for each independent variable. Logistical regressions were also run to compare the results, and there were no distinguishable differences between the linear and logistical regressions.

16. A possible partial explanation for this finding is that, in each subject group, the one issue significantly related to the use of a compensatory strategy may have accounted for the majority of variance in the three issues framed as having societal salience. As the results in Table 2 show, for subjects receiving the issue of gays in the military, the reported importance of health care had the strongest correlation with the decision-making strategy index; in Table 3, for the same group of subjects, health care is the issue that achieves statistical significance. Likewise, as shown in Table 2, for subjects receiving the issue of abortion the reported importance of economy had the strongest correlation with the decision-making strategy index; in Table 3, for the same group of subjects, economy is the issue that achieves statistical significance.

17. In analyzing open-ended responses, we were particularly able to identify subjects who quickly eliminated one candidate and then considered the remaining two candidates in a compensatory fashion. The index may not have been able to as finely tap this "two-stage" decision-making model, which is consistent with the *conjunctive* type of non-compensatory strategy discussed by Wright & Barbour, 1975. A qualitative review of index scores for specific "two-stage" subjects supports this contention: subjects tended to agree with non-compensatory index items 3 and 5 while also agreeing with compensatory index items 1, 4, 7 and 8.

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18. Another possible factor reducing the amount of ethical salience for the issue of gays in the military was raised during a debriefing session following the data collection. Some subjects said that they paid little attention to the issue despite personal feelings because it was an issue over which they had no control -- i.e., the decision whether to admit homosexuals into the military would be decided by legislators and military leadership, not the rank-and-file of the military. This would seem to be consistent with military protocol to follow orders regardless of personal disagreements.

19. Only the mean index scores for individuals receiving the issue of gays in the military do not closely mirror the results on the other graphs. For this group, individuals in the typology category of a) 0 issues with ethical salience and b) 2-4 issues with societal salience have a higher mean index score than their counterparts in the group receiving the issue of abortion; thus, for subjects receiving the issue of gays in the military, issues ascribed societal salience did not have as much influence on the decision-making process (see Table 9) as they did for subjects receiving the issue of abortion. As a result, the mean index scores of subjects in the two typology categories with 0 issues with ethical salience do not differ much for individuals receiving the issue of gays in the military. Regardless, however, for these individuals the impact of issues ascribed ethical salience is still clear in the upward slant of graph lines for both societal salience groups.

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Tables 1-10 and Figures 1-4

Table 1

Factor Analysis of Nine Statements Corresponding to Compensatory or Non-compensatory Decision-making Strategies

	Factor Loadings
1) How the candidates stood overall on the issues was more important to me than how they stood on a particular issue. (compensatory)	-.692
2) I compared candidates only on the issues that were important to me. (non-compensatory)	.689
3) I eliminated a candidate because we disagreed on an issue that was important to me. (non-compensatory)	.634
4) I used all the information provided to make my choice, looking at each candidate's stand on each issue. (compensatory)	-.673
5) I eliminated a candidate who did not meet certain set standards on an issue that was important to me. (non-compensatory)	.586
6) I looked for a candidate who agreed with me on the issue I thought was most important. The candidate who was closest to my position on that issue is the one I voted for. (non-compensatory)	.688
7) Using all the information, I weighed each candidate 's stand on each issue before making my final choice. The candidate who seemed the best overall is the one I voted for. (compensatory)	-.740
8) All the issues played a role in my decision amongst the candidates; while some issues were given less consideration than others, all the issues affected my candidate choice. (compensatory)	-.592
9) Not all the issues factored into my candidate choice; the decision was based on one or two key issues. (non-compensatory)	.705

Table 2
Correlations Between Reported Importance of Gays in the Military or Abortion, Economy, Education and Health Care and the Decision-making Strategy Index

Group 1: Issue Environment with Gays in the Military

	Gays/military	Economy	Education	Health care
Economy	.01			
Education	-.16	.50**		
Health care	-.06	.33**	.48**	
Index	.02	-.31**	-.29*	-.38**

*p<.05
**p<.001

Group 2: Issue Environment with Abortion

	Abortion	Economy	Education	Health care
Economy	-.18*			
Education	.05	.31**		
Health care	.15	.34**	.36**	
Index	.10	-.34**	-.21*	-.25*

*p<.05
**p<.001

Issue-importance scales: 1=not at all important, 7=extremely important
Index: Low is compensatory, high is non-compensatory

Table 3

Beta Weights for the Relationship Between the Reported Importance of Gays in the Military or Abortion, Economy, Education and Health Care and Open-ended Responses Indicating the Use of a Compensatory or Non-compensatory Decision-making Model

Group 1: Issue Environment with Gays in the Military

	Beta
Economy	-.10
Education	.05
Health care	-.36*
Gays in the military	.29*

Group 2: Issue Environment with Abortion

	Beta
Economy	-.26*
Education	.02
Health care	-.08
Abortion	.40**

Issue-importance scales: 1=not at all important, 7=extremely important
Dependent variable: 0=compensatory, 1=non-compensatory

* p<.05
** p<.001

Table 4

Percentage of Subjects Conceptualizing Gays in the Military or Abortion, Economy, Education and Health Care as Having Societal Salience, Ethical Salience, or as Not Mentioned/Ignored

Group 1: Issue Environment with Gays in the Military

	Gays/military	Economy	Education	Health Care
Societal Salience	49%	82%	77%	75%
Ethical Salience	28%	0%	3%	6%
No ment./Ignored	23%	18%	20%	19%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%

Group 2: Issue Environment with Abortion

	Abortion	Economy	Education	Health Care
Societal Salience	39%	74%	70%	70%
Ethical Salience	42%	0%	5%	1%
No ment./Ignored	19%	26%	25%	29%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 5
Percentage of Subjects Conceptualizing an Issue Environment as Having Societal Salience or Ethical Salience Whose Open-Ended Responses Indicated the Use of a Compensatory or Non-Compensatory Decision-making Model

Group 1: Issue Environment with Gays in the Military

	TYPE OF SALIENCE	
Model Used	**Societal**	**Ethical**
Compensatory	77%	25%
Non-compensatory	23%	75%
Totals	100%	100%
	(n=57)	(n=32)

X^2=22.9, d.f.=1, p=.000

Group 2: Issue Environment with Abortion

	TYPE OF SALIENCE	
Model Used	**Societal**	**Ethical**
Compensatory	92%	22%
Non-compensatory	8%	78%
Totals	100%	100%
	(n=49)	(n=37)

X^2=43.9, d.f.=1, p=.000

Table 6
Mean Decision-making Strategy Index Scores of Subjects Who Conceptualized an Issue Environment as Having Ethical Salience or Societal Salience

Group 1: Issue Environment with Gays in the Military

	Societal Salience (n=59)	Ethical Salience (n=32)	t	p
Index Mean	21.6	25.9	2.83	.006

Group 2: Issue Environment with Abortion

	Societal Salience (n=49)	Ethical Salience (n=37)	t	p
Index Mean	20.3	28.1	5.06	.000

Index: Low is compensatory, high is non-compensatory

Table 7

Percentage of Subjects Whose Open-ended Responses Indicated Conceptualizations of 0 to 4 Issues as Having Ethical Salience or Societal Salience

Group 1: Issue Environment with Gays in the Military

Number of Issues	Ethical Salience		Societal Salience	
0	65%	(n=59)	11%	(n=10)
1	32%	(n=29)	17%	(n=15)
2	3%	(n=3)	36%	(n=33)
3	0%	(n=0)	27%	(n=25)
4	0%	(n=0)	9%	(n=8)
Totals	100%	(n=91)	100%	(n=91)

Group 2: Issue Environment with Abortion

Number of Issues	Ethical Salience		Societal Salience	
0	57%	(n=49)	19%	(n=16)
1	38%	(n=33)	14%	(n=12)
2	5%	(n=4)	21%	(n=18)
3	0%	(n=0)	29%	(n=25)
4	0%	(n=0)	17%	(n=15)
Totals	100%	(n=86)	100%	(n=86)

Table 8
Percentage of Subjects in the Conceptual Typology of Issue Salience Whose Open-Ended Responses Indicated the Use of a Non-compensatory Decision-making Model

Group 1: Issue Environment with Gays in the Military

	Ethical Salience	
Societal Salience	**0 issues**	**1 or 2 issues**
0 or 1 issues	36% (n=11)	92% (n=13)
2 to 4 issues	19% (n=46)	63% (n=19)

X^2=26.7, d.f.=3, p=.000

Group 2: Issue Environment with Abortion

	Ethical Salience	
Societal Salience	**0 issues**	**1 or 2 issues**
0 or 1 issues	37% (n=8)	95% (n=20)
2 to 4 issues	2% (n=41)	59% (n=17)

X^2=52.5, d.f.=3, p=.000

Table 9
Beta Weights for the Relationship Between the Conceptual Typology Components of Ethical Salience and Societal Salience in a Voting Decision and the Decision-making Strategy Index

Group 1: Issue Environment with Gays in the Military

	Beta
Ethical Salience[a]	.26*
Societal Salience[b]	-.12
Adjusted R square	.08

Group 2: Issue Environment with Abortion

	Beta
Ethical Salience[a]	.40**
Societal Salience[b]	-.21*
Adjusted R square	.25

a) Coding: 0=0 issues, 1=1 or 2 issues
b) Coding: 0=0 or 1 issues, 1=2 to 4 issues
Index: Low is compensatory, high is non-compensatory

*$p<.05$
**$p<.001$

Table 10
Mean Decision-making Strategy Index Scores of Subjects in the Conceptual Typology of Issue Salience

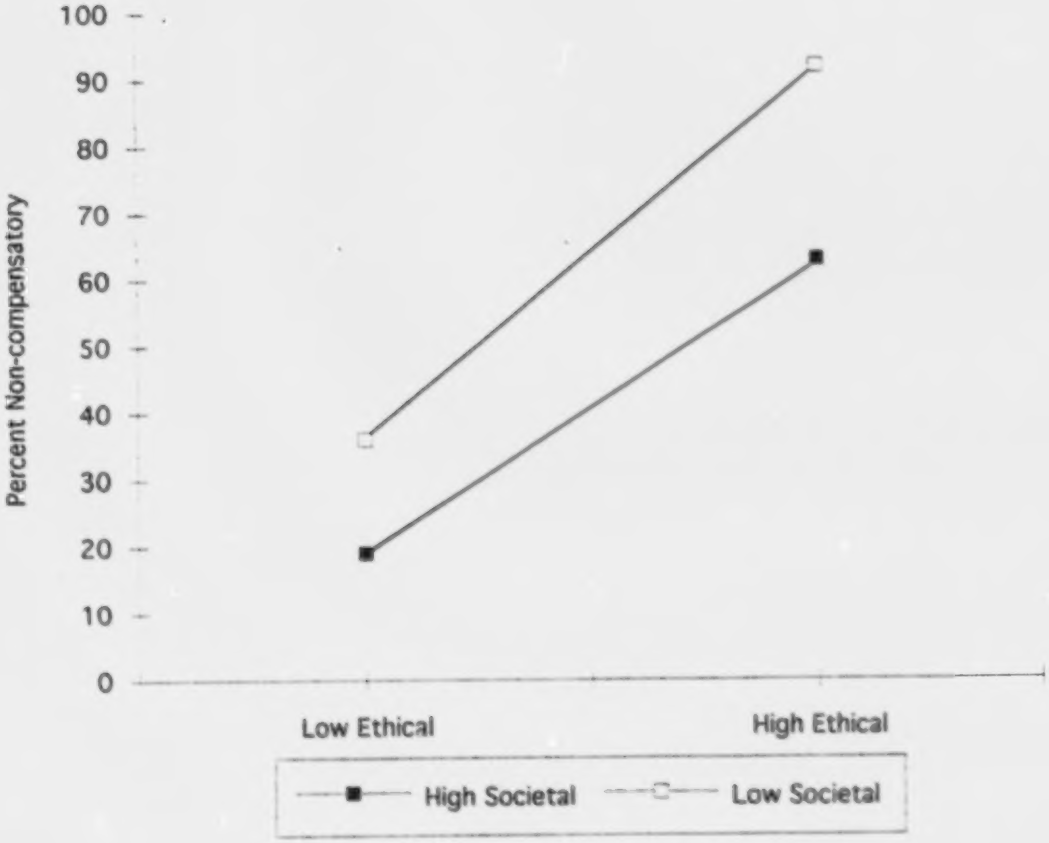
Group 1: Issue Environment with Gays in the Military

	Ethical Salience	
Societal Salience	0 issues	1 or 2 issues
0 or 1 issues	21.9 (n=11)	28.2 (n=13)
2 to 4 issues	21.5 (n=46)	24.3 (n=19)

Group 2: Issue Environment with Abortion

	Ethical Salience	
Societal Salience	0 issues	1 or 2 issues
0 or 1 issues	22.0 (n=8)	30.2 (n=20)
2 to 4 issues	19.9 (n=41)	25.5 (n=17)

Figure 1



Percentage of Subjects in the Gays in the Military Issue Environment Whose Open-ended Responses Indicated the Use of a Non-compensatory Decision Strategy

Figure 2

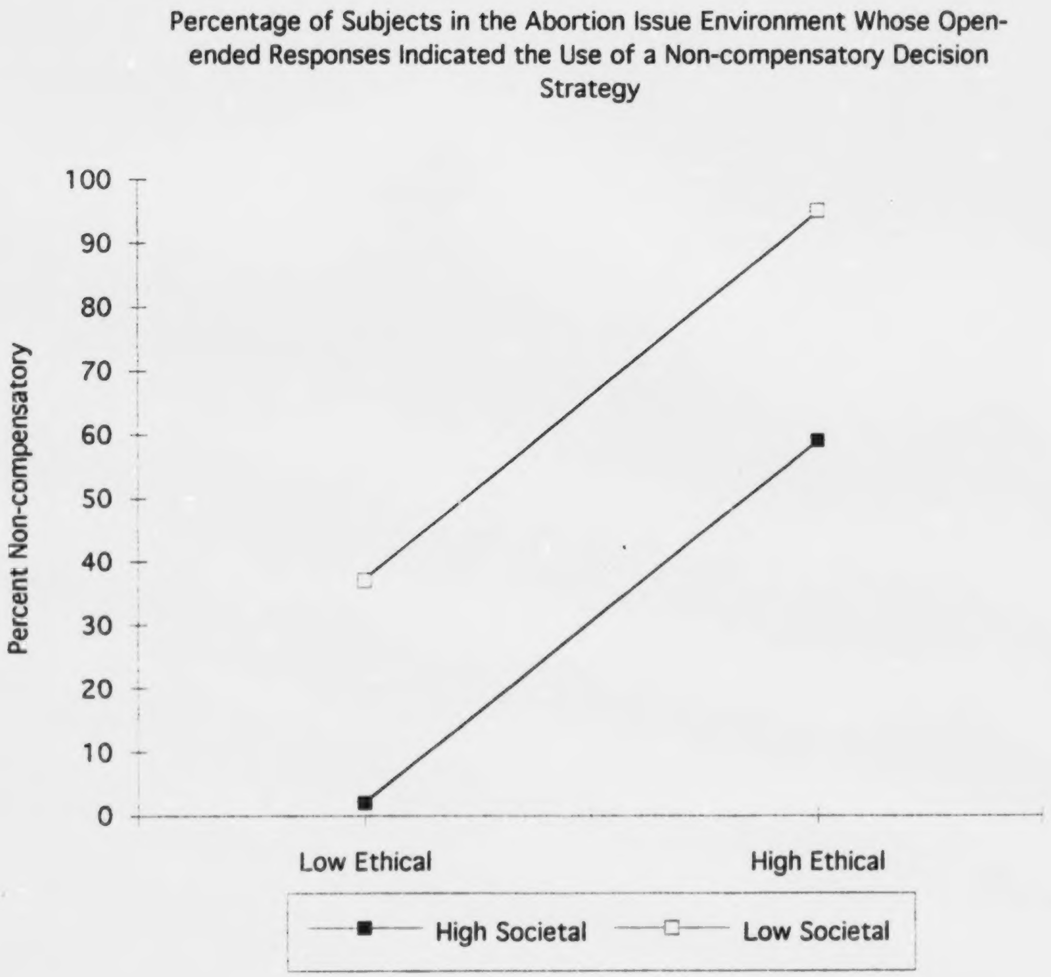

Percentage of Subjects in the Abortion Issue Environment Whose Open-ended Responses Indicated the Use of a Non-compensatory Decision Strategy

Figure 3

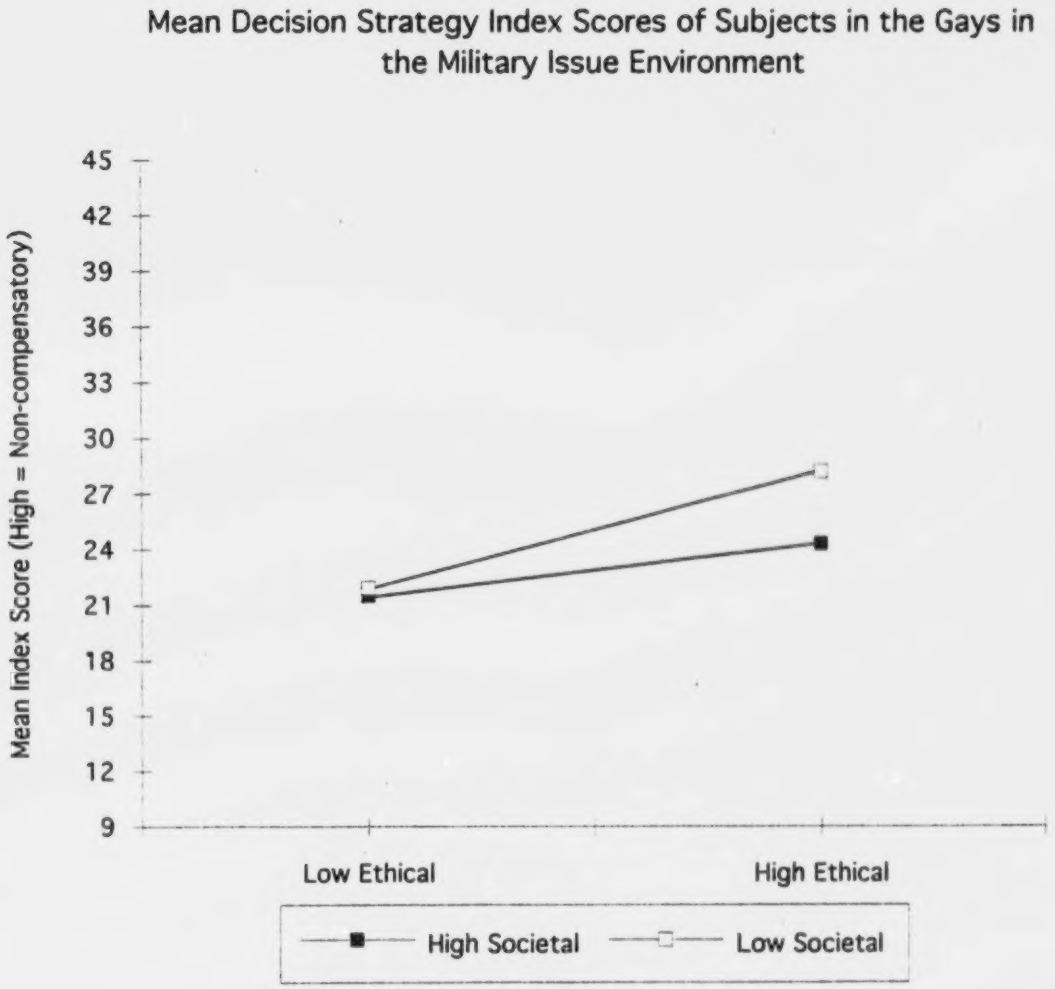
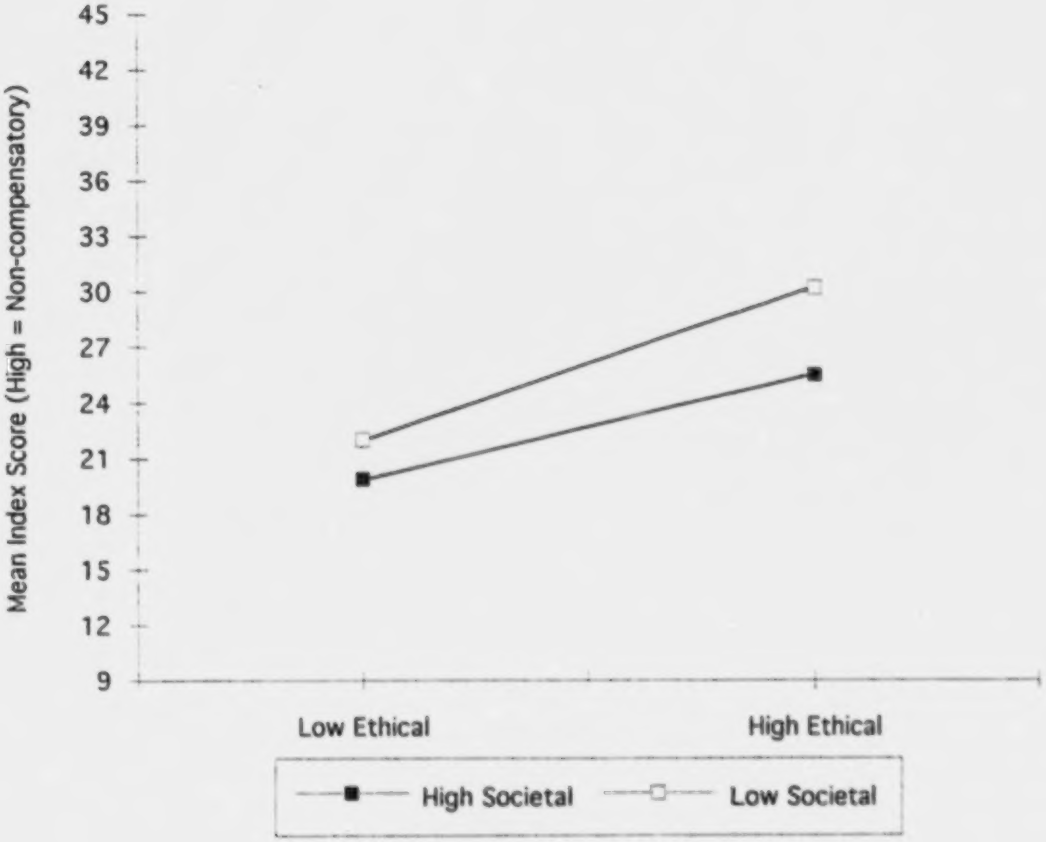

Mean Decision Strategy Index Scores of Subjects in the Gays in the Military Issue Environment
Mean Index Score (High = Non-compensatory)
45
42
39
36
33
30
27
24
21
18
15
12
9
Low Ethical
High Ethical
■ High Societal
□ Low Societal

Figure 4



Mean Decision Strategy Index Scores of Subjects in the Abortion Issue Environment

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ANONYMOUS GOVERNMENT SOURCES IN THE NEW YORK TIMES' COVERAGE OF THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE ACCORDS, THE CONFLICT IN BOSNIA AND THE CLINTON HEALTH CARE PACKAGE

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at the AEJMC National Conference
Atlanta GA, August 10-13, 1994

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of anonymous attribution in coverage of foreign and domestic policy issues as reported in the New York Times. News articles concerning the Middle East Peace Accords, the conflict in Bosnia and the Clinton Health Care Package were analyzed. With the paragraph as the unit of measurement, chi square analysis and cross-tabulation indicated significant differences across (1) matters of foreign policy when analyzed against each other, and (2) matters of foreign policy when analyzed against health care.

As expected, there were more anonymous references in the coverage of foreign policy, because the sources' personal and professional risks were assumed to be greater than when a highly scrutinized domestic issue was addressed. Too, the health care issue lent itself to accessible and competent sources outside of government, whereas the arcane nature of the accords and the Balkan conflict may have limited journalists' sources.

INTRODUCTION

Commentators Entman (1989) and Parenti (1993) have written at length about the problems associated with news articles concerning public affairs. A major problem, they argue, is the reliance by Western journalists on political elites, or "official sources," as definers of news involving political issues. Not only do the representatives of established authority have the power to shape the news we receive, the observers posit, they in fact have the capacity to exercise spin tactics anonymously, their quotes being attributed only to "administration officials" and "supporters of the plan."

That the practice of anonymous attribution would lead Entman and Parenti to cite an inherent loss of credibility comes not as a liberal attack on the establishment media but as a valid point. What, after all, is the difference between relying continuously on "official sources" and simply advocating the ideas of established authority?

In arguing for the utility of anonymous attribution, Blankenburg (1992) offered a perspective opposite that of Entman and Parenti. He cited the need for anonymous attribution, noting that news sources would be reluctant to address controversial issues if personally identified (Hage, et al., 1976; Williams, 1978). Other commentators (Wulfemeyer, 1985; Wulfemeyer & Mcfadden, 1986; Isaacs, 1982) also have noted that by remaining anonymous, official sources are able to contribute ideas to the marketplace without fear of professional, even personal repercussions. In brief, then, anonymity can enrich the public discussion.

The question then becomes, what is to prevent politicians and other "official sources" from involving mass media in the transmission of self-serving, politically prosperous information, and in the floating of trial balloons that serve no genuine public interest? As an example, in his study of news magazines, Culbertson (1978) found common use of "veiled" attribution--it occurred in 70% of Newsweek's stories and in 75% of Time's--and further found that attribution phrases emphasized partisan ties, indicating possible political bias in the treatment of news.

Glasser (1983) argued that in an effort to remain free from unrecognized pre-judgments, journalists concentrate on reporting rather than interpreting the news for their public, using themselves largely as vehicles for the contentions and explanations of their sources. This reporting carries bias, however, because in relying on official sources, reporters tend to favor the prominent and established--those who Prewitt and Stone (1973) called "the men who direct large banking and industrial institutions, who occupy the strategic positions in the huge government machinery and in the military establishment, who, in short, can by their personal decisions affect in direct and important respects the livelihood and lives of the rest of the population (p.132)."

Rubin (1987) found the information offered by these elite sources to be insufficient at providing the kind of detailed coverage necessary for public scrutiny. He investigated the news media's coverage of the disasters at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, concluding that the accompanying flow of information showed the optimistic bulletins of "official sources" to provide too few facts and weakened credibility with both journalists and the public.

A professional journalist covering El Salvador since 1987, Smyth (1993) offers the following with respect to journalists' reliance on representatives of established authority:

> "In the post-cold war era, ethnic rivalry may have replaced ideology as the most likely cause of conflict, but while all else changes one journalistic habit picked up during the past four decades will, in all likelihood, persist--the habit of relying heavily on the mission, as the U.S. embassy is known, for assessments and information. In an increasingly unfamiliar world, in fact, the temptation to do so will be even stronger (p.35)."

While Blankenburg, for instance, might find utility in this practice of relying on "the mission" for information about policy in El Salvador, Smyth explains how such reliance can result in distorted news and why it thus should be carefully scrutinized by scholarly and professional observers:

> "Following the November 1989 murder of six Jesuit intellectuals, their housekeeper, and the housekeeper's daughter, U.S. embassy officials in San Salvador told Newsweek that they had intelligence information indicating that rightist leader Roberto D'Aubuisson, long identified with El Salvador's death squads, had been planning to kill the priests...The officials said that, on the night before the murders, D'Aubuisson had told advisers that something had to be done about the Jesuits. Newsweek ran the story as an `exclusive' on December 11, 1989...But it was later shown in court that D'Aubuisson had nothing to do with the murders...No corroboration of the alleged CIA report pointing to D'Aubuisson has ever been provided...(p.35)"

Smyth further discusses the problem of attribution by citing a series of press briefings given in early 1991 by William Walker, U.S. ambassador to El Salvador. Walker, reports Smyth, told reporters that United Nations mediator Alvaro de Soto was biased toward leftist guerrillas, unprofessional as a diplomat, and generally ineffective. Before Walker would allow his comments to go "on record," however, he insisted that they be attributed only to a "Western Diplomat," thus giving the impression that his views were representative of all diplomats. Actually, reports Smyth, the preponderance of Western Diplomats in San Salvador considered de Soto to be a highly competent professional, and while the anonymous attribution "Western Diplomat" was intended to sound official and build confidence among readers, it actually led to distorted news.

Three communication theories cited by McQuail (1987) provide a philosophical framework for the continued reliance of journalists on official sources. The first, Mass Society theory, indicates an interdependence of institutions exercising power in society, thus incorporating media into the sources of social power and authority. News content is likely to serve the interests of the political and economic power-holders, and because the media seldom offer a critical or alternative definition of the world, they accommodate the interests of elites and assist in keeping the public dependent.

Second is the Classic, or Marxist, position. Under the tenets of this theory, media are essentially a means of production and conform to a general type of capitalist industrial form. Because they are in the monopolistic ownership of a capitalist class, they tend to be nationally or internationally organized to serve the interests of this class. Given the consolidation patterns of mass media in recent years, this argument is particularly relevant to the discussion of media interests and practices. Fewer and fewer companies are acquiring greater and greater holdings, all the while purporting to uphold the principles of responsible journalism.

Finally, Political-Economic theory considers the media as an institution that is part of the economic system with close ties to the political system. The surviving voices, McQuail contends, will belong to those who are least likely to criticize the prevailing distribution of wealth and power. And, who are less likely to criticize the prevailing distribution of power than political elites?

Graber (1989) adds further anecdotal testimony, citing a political model of the relationship between government and mass media. "When the prevailing political environment is capitalist democracy modified by social welfare orientations, as is true in the United States, the ideological base sets the tone for the world view implicit in most fact and fiction stories. Supporters of the prevailing system are pictured as good guys, opponents as bad guys. High status people and institutions are covered by the media; those who are outside the dominant system or remote from the center of power are generally ignored (p.77)."

In considering the literature involving the attribution practices of contemporary mass media, qualitative support for this dominance interpretation is abundant. McQuail notes, for example, that news media are characterized by "their centralization; their availability for control at source by a few--whether as business or state concerns; their great reach; their unidirectionality; their standardization; their attractiveness and prestige for dependent mass publics (p.59)."

Olien, Tichenor and Donohue (1989) explored a bonafide state concern in their benchmark study of a controversy surrounding the installation of powerlines throughout rural Minnesota. The researchers were interested in studying media involvement in social movements, proceeding from the notion that because reporting on social problems has long been considered a key role of media, we might expect media coverage to trigger these movements. This notion is then refuted through a discussion of mass media's general deference to mainstream values--a deference that causes media to side with established authority instead of special interest groups.

Olien, Tichenor and Donohue were given an opportunity to address this deference when the state of Minnesota sought to extend a formidable powerline throughout its rural parts. Angry residents saw this action as (1) a usurpation of local rights through improper application of eminent domain, and (2) as threatening to human and animal health because of the use of untested power transmission. Though obviously controversial, initial coverage of this issue was limited to small weeklies and regional dailies. Metropolitan dailies began coverage only when the bureaucratic confrontation stage had been reached; official sources then began to define the issue for larger audiences. The ultimate media image of this case, then, was a special interest group suffering a massive defeat. The authors concluded that media often serve not as watch-dogs for a general public but primarily as guard-dogs for powerful interests and mainstream values, a conclusion that takes us to the investigation at hand.

In this study, the broad use of official sources is examined through a content analysis of the New York Times' coverage of (1) the peace accords involving Israel and the Palestine Liberation

Organization,(2) the conflict in Bosnia, and (3) the Clinton Health Care Package. The study thus allows us to examine current patterns of anonymous attribution, and more specifically, to test whether the use of unidentified official sources is more prevalent among domestic or foreign news articles.

Blankenburg (1992) found that during times of foreign crisis the amount of anonymous attribution increases significantly among newspapers. As we consider coverage of the peace accords and Bosnia relative to that of health care, we might expect fewer sources to be attributed in the first two because (1) the issues are somewhat arcane and thus may be limited to the insight of government officials, former officials and academics, whereas health care lends itself to highly accessible and competent sources outside government; and (2) the sources may have more to lose professionally by commenting on a sensitive matter of foreign policy, as opposed to a highly scrutinized domestic issue. Based on these considerations, this study offers the following central hypothesis:

> Hypothesis
> When coverage of the Middle East Peace Accords and Bosnia are considered across coverage of the Clinton Health Care Package, more use of anonymous attribution is expected to occur in stories involving foreign policy.

Method

Of primary concern to this study was the frequency of anonymous attribution in selected news articles in the national edition of the New York Times. Through a content analysis of stories involving a significant domestic issue and two significant foreign policy issues, we examined the extent to which the Times used as its sources unnamed officials in the development of public affairs news articles. Also of interest were the differences across coverage of domestic and foreign issues. The first wave of analysis included the peace accords and health care and used the September 1-30, 1993 weekday editions. The second wave included coverage of Bosnia and health care and used the February 1-28, 1994 weekday editions.

In his study, Blankenburg (1992) considered whether a news article made use of anonymous attribution, using the article itself as the unit of measurement. In this study, part of the purpose was to learn how frequently a reader is confronted with attributions involving unidentified official sources--attributions that never identify a specific person as the sender of what oftentimes becomes a controversial message. This analysis was accomplished through considering the paragraph as the unit of measurement and simply indicating whether it referenced an unidentified official source. When all paragraphs had been analyzed, an overall ratio for each type of article indicated the number of paragraphs containing an anonymous attribution as the numerator and all other paragraphs--those that did not reference an anonymous source or those that did not reference any source--as the denominator. The numerators and denominators for both foreign and domestic coverage were then quantified by cross-tabulation and chi square analysis.

In the top cells of Tables 1, 2 and 3, we see the number of paragraphs that included anonymous attribution, while in the lower cells, we observe the paragraphs that did not indicate an anonymous source or did not indicate any source. The column totals represent the total number of paragraphs analyzed for each type of story.

In order to maintain consistency for quantitative analysis, an operational definition of "anonymous attribution" had to be developed. This definition became quite important, for examination of the articles indicated patterns of reference that some would consider highly ambiguous but that others would proclaim as necessary for the inclusion of all information.

For purposes of this study, the content analysis included references to unidentified government sources, the most common being "officials" and "Western diplomats," but did not include references to institutions, such as "the Administration." Nor did the content analysis consider private sector representatives and the common ambiguity "the documents stated" as unattributed references.

Some observers might consider an "institution" as little more than a collection of officials and would perhaps consider a paraphrased reference to documents as lacking in credibility altogether. It is important, however, to avoid going overboard with analysis, such that the investigation includes virtually anything an observer considers suspect, for it is over-reaching value judgments that detract from social-science credibility. In brief, by limiting anonymous references to government officials only, this study sought to establish credibility through a specific research design.

Important also to this method was the type of article examined. This study did not include feature-oriented, one-source articles, editorials, articles in a series or "News Analysis." In general, these types of articles do not aspire to define issues for readers--"News Analysis," for example, is often an essay by a prominent reporter in the aftermath of initial coverage--but rather seek to provide a different, or personal, perspective. Current events typically have been defined by the time these supplementary articles reach print, and the resulting lack of issue definition and story framing would detract from the study's interests.

Finally, because headlines and subheads have served as the basis for entire studies involving political communication, they were not considered as part of this study. Hard news copy was the sole consideration.

Results

This study considered the extent to which anonymous attribution occurred in prominent news articles of a national newspaper, and whether a difference existed across foreign and domestic news with respect to this use of anonymous sources.

To test whether a meaningful difference existed across stories concerning the peace accords, the conflict in the Balkans, and the Clinton Health Care Package, cross-tabulation and chi square analysis were performed based on data collected from the New York Times during September 1993 (Wave I) and February 1994 (Wave II).

Content analysis from Wave I included 924 paragraphs involving the peace accords and 550 involving the health plan. Analysis from Wave II included 971 paragraphs involving Bosnia and 376 involving the health plan. Ideally, a domestic issue other than health care would have been examined during Wave II, but no such issues arose. Health care, in short, continued at the forefront of domestic news coverage.

The paragraphs examined came solely from "hard news" articles and did not stem from feature-oriented stories, articles in a series, or "News Analysis" segments involving a reporter's interpretation of an issue. The inherent value of the articles not included is appreciated, but as stated in the method section, the purpose was to investigate articles in which issues were initially defined and reported. "When news happened," who did reporters look to for information and how did the reporters cite these sources?

As Table 1 indicates, during the Wave I period, anonymous officials were cited in 290, or 32%, of the 924 paragraphs involving the peace accords, and in 96, or 17%, of the 550 paragraphs involving the health plan. This statistically significant difference (chi square=34.61, DF=1, N=1474, P<.001) offers support for the study's central hypothesis; that is, when coverage of the peace accords involving Israel and the PLO was considered across coverage of the Clinton Health Care Package, significant differences in the use of anonymous attribution were observed, such that unidentified official sources were cited more frequently in the matter of foreign policy. With respect to the larger research question involving the cumulative use of unnamed official sources by newspaper reporters, we can look to the overall totals of Table 1.

In this analysis, 386, or 26%, of 1474 paragraphs analyzed contained anonymous attribution. Thus, approximately one out of every four paragraphs of hard news involving two prominent issues included at least one attribution to an unidentified official.

Table 2 offers the results of the second wave of analysis. Once again, we observe a significant difference across foreign and domestic coverage, though the difference was not as strong (chi square=4.511, DF=1, N=1347, P=.034). The percentage of anonymous sources in health care stories dropped slightly from September, 1993 to February, 1994, but the drop did not approach significance (chi square=.663, DF=1, N=926, p=.415).

Table 1
Cross-tabulation of accords and health care
by use of anonymous attribution

Reported Statistics
Frequency
Expected Frequency
Column Percent

	Health	Peace Accords	Total
Paragraphs with	96	290	386
Anonymous Attribution	144	242	
	17.45	31.39	
Paragraphs without	454	634	1088
Anonymous Attribution	405	682	
	82.55	68.61	
Total	550	924	1474

(Chi square=34.61, DF=1, N=1474, P<.001)

Table 2
Cross-tabulation of health care and Bosnia
by use of anonymous attribution

Reported Statistics
Frequency
Expected Frequency
Column Percent

	Health	Bosnia	Total
Paragraphs with	58	199	257
Anonymous Attribution	72	185	
	15.43	20.49	
Paragraphs without	318	772	1090
Anonymous Attribution	304	786	
	84.57	79.51	
Total	376	971	1347

(Chi square=4.511, DF=1, N=1347, P=.034)

Table 3
Cross-tabulation of Bosnia and peace accords
by use of anonymous attribution

Reported Statistics
Frequency
Expected Frequency
Column Percent

	Bosnia	Peace Accords	Total
Paragraphs with Anonymous Attribution	199	290	489
	251	238	
	20.49	31.39	
Paragraphs without Anonymous Attribution	772	634	1406
	720	685	
	79.51	68.61	
Total	971	924	1895

(Chi square=29.332, DF=1, N=1895, P<.001)

Because the use of anonymous officials as sources did drop markedly from analysis of the peace accords to the analysis of Bosnia, a third cross-tabulation was performed. Table 3 indicates the results of this test, showing significant differences in the coverage of two matters of foreign policy (Chi square=29.332, DF=1, N=1895, p<.001). Thus, not only were differences across foreign and domestic coverage observed, but also seen were differences across the type of foreign coverage. Theoretical explanations for these differences are offered in the next section.

Discussion

Whether the observed patterns of anonymous attribution are considered to detract from professional credibility is entirely dependent on individual perspectives and journalistic philosophy. Blankenburg argued that such attribution is vital to the marketplace of ideas while professional commentators such as Smyth point out the inherent problems with citing unnamed officials--namely the distorted news that sometimes results.

While anonymous information may enrich the public discussion, it is important to consider that it also may have a negative effect on news media by (1) allowing self-serving officials to define issues without accepting responsibility, (2) allowing these officials to view media as a collective avenue for delivering frequent trial balloons about matters of public policy, and (3) allowing journalists to extrapolate, even fabricate, information and attribute it to a source who can never be contacted.

Wave I of this study found 26 percent of the paragraphs involving two prominent issues to contain anonymous attribution, and Wave II resulted in 19 percent; highly liberal observers, though, would have found even higher percentages to exist. Had this study indicated ambiguous references to institutions, private sector officials and documents as unnamed sources, and further counted the actual number of anonymous attributions within the unit of measurement--some paragraphs contained as many as three "officials said"--the average percentage of all paragraphs containing unnamed sources would have been closer to 35 percent, an uncomfortable percentage when one considers the problems observed by Smyth.

With respect to the findings of Blankenburg involving anonymous attribution during times of foreign crisis, this study supports the notion that official sources will be relied on more heavily for information about foreign policy than domestic policy.

In considering the three issues examined in this study, we can see that public officials would not be as hesitant to comment about a health plan consistently under attack as they would be on important and sensitive matters of foreign policy. For instance, the United States has economic interests throughout the Middle East and thus the wrong comment could have had serious implications. By contrast, the Clinton Health Care Package had been the subject of partisan debate on Capitol Hill for several months prior to this study, as politicians addressed the interests of their constituents. Relative to the peace accords commentary on the health plan was "safe ground" for public officials, and consequently, they might have been less concerned with maintaining anonymity. Too, the health care issue lent itself to accessible and credible sources outside government.

With respect to the differences found across coverage of the peace accords and Bosnia, a possible explanation stems from the United Nations' involvement in coverage of the latter. To some extent, these sources may have relieved American officials of some responsibility, allowing U.N. names to be identified more often in news stories. We also should consider diplomatic sensitivity in addressing this finding. Given America's historical and current interests in the Middle East, news sources perhaps considered name revelation to be a greater professional risk here than they did in stories involving Bosnia, the latter paling substantially in regard to long-term Western attention.

Thus, the findings of this study largely support the findings of Blankenburg in his studies of anonymous attribution. Though the authors differ with respect to credibility arguments, both found anonymous attribution to increase with political sensitivity.

Future scholarship on anonymous attribution would be most productive if it included national, regional and local publications while also considering more than one medium. Perhaps a comparison involving network news and national newspapers across local television news and local newspapers would give a more specific indication of reliance on unnamed officials while also indicating which demographic segments of society are most apt to be exposed to such messages.

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An Analysis of Front Page Newspaper Photographic Coverage of the 1992 Presidential Election Campaign

by
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A Paper Presented to the Visual Communication Division
of the Association for Education in Journalism
Annual Convention, Atlanta, Georgia, August 1994

An Analysis of Front Page Newspaper Photographic Coverage of the 1992 Presidential Election Campaign

Front page photographic coverage of the presidential candidates, vice presidential candidates and their spouses was analyzed for eight elite newspapers. Analysis of technical attributes demonstrated no significant difference in coverage across papers or among candidates except for camera angle. Significant differences among how the presidential candidates appeared in photographs over three behavioral and three contextual attributes. Results support that the media covered the candidates consistently and the differences in the photos published were due to individual presentation. Clinton appeared more positively than Bush and Perot.

All presidential campaign coverage is criticized for bias and 1992's coverage was no different. But coverage of the 1992 campaign was thought to be critical by the media because of the questionable job the media had done in 1988.[1] Press coverage of the 1988 presidential campaign was criticized as coverage of flags and furloughs - flash over substance. The media discussed its 1988 coverage and sought ways to do better in 1992.[2]

Some criticism of political coverage may always be attributed to disgruntled voters whose candidate failed to get elected or reelected. But complaints or perceptions of unbalanced coverage is not just an audience or reader issue. In a Times-Mirror poll taken after the 1992 election, 55 percent of American reporters believed George Bush's candidacy was damaged by the way the press covered it.[3] Thirty-six percent thought the coverage helped Clinton win the presidency.[4]

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[1] Debra Gersh, "Campaign Coverage: The Final Report: The Freedom Forum issues its fourth report on media coverage of the presidential campaign," **Editor & Publisher**, March 6, 1993, p.29.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Anon., "Dear Primetime," **Primetime Live**, American Broadcasting Company, March 11, 1993.

If members of the audience and of the press both perceive unbalanced coverage, it would be reasonable to conclude that this impression exists because some coverage or some type of coverage may have been biased. But the bibliometric search[5] studies conducted by the Freedom Forum found no such evidence of bias in the 1992 presidential campaign in the 20 media entities it examined.[6]

Most studies of bias or imbalance in presidential campaign coverage (and news coverage in general) tend to focus on the verbal component of the story.[7] Studies conducted on previous presidential campaigns have counted column inches of a story and classified headlines by size to determine which party or candidate received more attention.[8] The studies all suggest comparable coverage for the two major parties, the Democrats and the Republicans.[9] Even in years with a significant third party candidate, Democrats and Republicans still received the same amount of coverage.[10]

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Bibliometric searches are where key words are searched for in databases to determine how frequently the word or words are used.

[6] Martha FitzSimon, ed., **An Uncertain Season: Reporting in the Post Primary Period** (New York:The Freedom Forum Media Studies, 1992). Martha FitzSimon, ed., **The Finish Line: Covering the Campaign's Final Days** (New York:The Freedom Forum Media Studies, 1992).

[7] See Martha FitzSimon, ed., **An Uncertain Season: Reporting in the Post Primary Period** (New York:The Freedom Forum Media Studies, 1992). Martha FitzSimon, ed., **The Finish Line: Covering the Campaign's Final Days** (New York:The Freedom Forum Media Studies, 1992). Guido H. Stempel III and John W. Windhauser, "Coverage of the Prestige Press of the 1988 Presidential Campaign," **Journalism Quarterly**, 66:894-896, 919 (1989). Guido H. Stempel III and John W. Windhauser, "The Prestige Press Revisited: Coverage of the1980 Presidential Campaign," **Journalism Quarterly**, 61:49-55,(1984).

[8] Guido H. Stempel III and John W. Windhauser, "Coverage of the Prestige Press of the 1988 Presidential Campaign," **Journalism Quarterly**, 66:894-896, 919 (1989). Guido H. Stempel III and John W. Windhauser, "The Prestige Press Revisited: Coverage of the1980 Presidential Campaign," **Journalism Quarterly**, 61:49-55,(1984).

[9] Stempel and Windhauser, op. cit., FitzSimon, op. cit.

[10] Stempel and Windhauser, op. cit., FitzSimon, op. cit.

While this research does impart valuable information, it only provides part of the picture. Looking at coverage through the verbal component may not be an accurate determinant of bias when images can carry important political information. In a series of experiments concerning televised images of political leaders, researchers found support for facial displays being able to arouse and influence viewers even when embedded in the background of a newscast where the political figure's voice was not heard.[11] They found that even though similar emotions may be conveyed by the visual, the audio and the combination of the two, these channels did not seem to contribute equally to the emotional impact.[12] Research in the print media has demonstrated photographs tend to elicit a more emotional response than a text-only or text-and-graphics presentation.[13]

Research has demonstrated the size of the photo has an influence over people's perception.[14] Dominant photographs help to set agendas and heighten awareness of an issue.[15] Dominant color photos on the front page of a newspaper will be the first item looked at 49 percent of the time and black and white photographs will be the first item looked at 35 percent of the time.[16] When all the elements of a newspaper are assessed in terms of what gets processed by people, artwork and photographs lead: 80 percent of artwork and 75 percent of photos are looked at compared to 56 percent of headlines and 25 percent of text.[17]

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[11] John T. Lanzetta, Denis G. Sullivan, Roger D. Masters and Gregory J. McHugo, **"Viewers' Emotional and Cognitive Responses to Televised Images of Political,"** in Sidney Kraus and Richard M. Perloff, eds., **Mass Media and Political Thought: An Information Processing Approach**. (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1985).

[12] Ibid.

[13] Pegie Stark, "Information & Graphics," **Poynter Report**, Summer 1992, pp. 8-10.

[14] Mario R. Garcia and Pegie Stark, **Eyes on the News** (St. Petersburg, FL: The Poynter Institute for Media Studies, 1991).

[15] Wayne Wanta, "The Effects of Dominant Photographs: An Agenda-Setting Experiment," **Journalism Quarterly**, 65:107-111 (1988).

[16] Mario R. Garcia and Pegie Stark, **op. cit.**

News photographs are vital in forming opinions about people and they make information processing more precise, realistic and emotional than the verbal component alone.[18] Different types of images attract different kinds of attention: closeups of people that are familiar are most likely to be attended to and processed.[19]

Readers and viewers tend to notice these visual differences in coverage as evidenced by the response to ***PrimeTime Live's*** request for examples of bias in the 1992 campaign.[20] Viewers sent in newspaper examples of bias in photographs where one candidate was presented more positively than another or where one photograph was obviously larger.[21] Although ***PrimeTime Live*** did state that its segment was not a scientific poll, it was looking at a self-selected sample and an extremely limited one: bias in coverage cannot be accurately measured from one issue of a newspaper from a political campaign that lasts months.[22]

News photographs need to be examined further if coverage is to be accurately analyzed and bias or influence is to be understood. Research confirms that much of the message received from the media is not strictly from the verbal component.

Two published studies have been done on campaign photographs in newsmagazines: one for the 1984 presidential election[23] and one for the

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Doris Graber, **Processing the News: How People Tame the Information Tide**, (White Plains, New York: Longman, 1988).

[19] Ibid.

[20] **PrimeTime Live**, op. cit.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

1988 presidential election.[24] In the 1984 study, results indicated some form of bias by candidate: 59 percent of the presidential candidate photos were of Reagan compared to 41 percent of the photos being of Mondale.[25] Ferraro was shown 71 percent of the time to Bush's 29 percent.[26] This study also looked at the behavior, context and perspective in the photo of the candidate and found some differences attributable to the candidates: across newsmagazines the results were consistent.[27]

The 1988 study showed 54 percent of the presidential candidate photos were of Bush compared to 46 percent of the photos being of Dukakis.[28] Quayle was shown 75 percent of the time to Bentsen's 25 percent.[29] Photographs of candidates were analyzed for behavior, context and perspective and again some differences were found attributable to the politicians. Results indicated that editors attempted to provide balanced coverage between parties but that Republican candidates received slightly more and better play.[30]

In analyzing photographs of political candidates one is not only analyzing the technical attributes of the photo but also the attributes of the candidate himself. Candidates present themselves for the camera and the photographer or editor in turn chooses which presentation he or she will re-

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[23] Sandra E. Moriarty and Gina M. Garramone, "A Study of Newsmagazine Photographs of the 1984 Presidential Campaign," **Journalism Quarterly**, 63:728-734 (1986).

[24] Sandra E. Moriarty and Mark N. Popovich, "Newsmagazine Visuals and the 1988 Presidential Election," **Journalism Quarterly**, 68:371-380 (1991).

[25] Moriarty and Garramone, op. cit.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Moriarty and Popovich, op. cit.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

present to his or her viewers or readers.[31] Attributes like photo size, dominance, position on page and camera angle are seen as products of representation because the photographer or editor is the gatekeeper. But where the photographer or editor have less say in making the decision - whether the candidate smiles or whether he is seen interacting with a crowd - those are primarily products of the candidate's presentation. The behavior and context may initially be the province of the candidate but that doesn't mean the media can't influence these things. Photo selection is often based on some behavior characteristics, such as whether the candidate is seen as active or passive. Size of the photo and how much prominence is given to a photo are often directly related to the content of the photo even if it is part of the candidate's presentation.

Even if there is some relationship between the technical aspects of a photograph and the presentation of the candidate, both must be explored to determine if bias exists and to describe its possible role in the photographic coverage of the presidential race.

Method

Sample. This content analysis looked at 486 photographs of all presidential candidates, vice presidential candidates and their spouses from 936 front pages of eight newspapers - the Boston ***Globe***, the Chicago ***Tribune***, the ***Christian Science Monitor***, the Los Angeles ***Times***, the New York ***Times***, the San Francisco ***Chronicle***, ***USA Today***, and the Washington ***Post*** - from July 1 to November 3, 1992. Front pages were selected because of their high visibility by even those who may not spend much time with the paper: such a reader is still likely to attend to the photo and process it.[32]

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[31] Moriarity and Garramone, op. cit.

[32] Garcia and Stark, op. cit.

Candidates and their spouses were analyzed because of their recognizability to a specific political party. The publications chosen represent eight of the eleven newspapers used in the Freedom Forum's bibliometric study of this same campaign. As with the Prestige Press in the Stempel studies, these papers are not necessarily typical papers but they do represent an elite group with an ability to influence not only readers but other media as well.[33] Looking at front pages from this post-primary "homestretch" allows one to examine the narrowed field of viable candidates. This is the same time period as in the Freedom Forum's study and it includes the traditional official campaign period.[34] Every photo on the front page containing a picture of a candidate or his spouse was coded.

Coding. Each photo was coded for: date of publication; who appeared in the photo; who appeared as the prominent figure in the photo (determined by the person with the largest face); size of photo; dominance of photo; position of the photo in relation to the fold; camera angle; torso behavior of prominent figure; arm behavior of prominent figure; hand behavior of prominent figure; facial expression of prominent figure; setting; dress of prominent figure; and interaction of prominent figure. The categories of position in relation to the fold, camera angle, torso behavior, arm behavior, hand behavior, facial expression, setting, dress and interaction were all coded on a scale of one to three with three being the most favorable and one being the least.[35] Scales are based on nonverbal communication research on what is perceived by people as positive, neutral and negative attributes. The specific scales for each category, from most favorable to least, were: position in relation to the fold, "above fold," "on fold," "below fold;" camera angle, "looking up at," "eye-level," "looking down at;" torso behavior, "bowed or slumped," "sitting or unclear," "standing tall, upright;" arm behavior "at side, rest or folded," "midbody or unseen," "above head;" hand behavior, "at side, rest or down," "midbody or unseen," "gesturing;" facial expression, "unhappy, worried or tired," "serious or indeterminate," "cheerful, confident;" setting, "informal," "unclear or unfocused," "formal;" dress, "casual, raincoat" "shirtsleeves," "dignified, suit;" and interaction, "alone, inattentive crowd or colleagues," "unseen crowd or colleagues," "cheering crowd, attentive colleagues." [36] Intercoder agreement among three coders was an average of 94.3 percent across attributes. Level of significance was set at .05.

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[33] Stempel and Windhauser, op. cit.

[34] FitzSimon, op. cit.

[35] See Paul Eckman and Wallace V. Friesen, **Unmasking the Face**, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey:Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975) for a discussion on reading positive, neutral and negative facial expressions. See Mark I. Hickson III and Don W. Stacks, **Nonverbal Communication: Studies and Applications**, (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Publishing, 1989) for discussions of nonverbal body behavior and how people perceive different types of dress.

Results

The attributes primarily associated with the media's re-presentation of the candidate or spouse, the technical attributes, provided little support that the press demonstrated any bias in its coverage. George Bush did appear more often as would be expected with an incumbent presidential candidate but there was no significant statistical difference between the frequency of one figure appearing as compared with their counterpart. George Bush did not appear significantly more than Bill Clinton or Ross Perot. There were no significant differences among figures in respect to newspaper, size of photo, dominance of photo, position of the photo on the page or the timing in the campaign *(see tables 1 and 2 in the appendix)*.

The attribute that was significant was camera angle among all three presidential candidates (Cramer's V = .13763, df = 2, $p < .01$) and between Bush and Clinton (Cramer's V = .14145, df = 1, $p < .05$). The difference is Clinton being shot where the camera level is looking down at him 23 percent of the time compared to Bush's 14 percent and Perot's 6 percent. Likewise, only 60 percent of the photos of Clinton were taken at eye-level compared to Bush's 72 percent and Perot's 82 percent. Photos taken looking up at the candidates were fairly consistent: Clinton 17 percent, Bush 14 percent and Perot 13 percent *(see table 3 in the appendix).*

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[36] The categories and descriptions for torso behavior, arm behavior, hand behavior, facial expression, setting, dress, interaction and camera angle are similar to as the ones used in the Moriarty and Garramone study.

Results indicate that there were differences in how the presidential candidates appeared in the photographs. Facial expression was significant among all three presidential candidates (Cramer's V = .19175, df = 2, $p < .000001$) and between Bush and Clinton (Cramer's V = .26376, df = 1, $p < .00001$). Clinton is seen cheerful or confident 63.9 percent of the time compared to Bush's 38 percent and Perot's 37.5 percent. Only 34.2 percent of the photos of Clinton showed him with serious or indeterminate facial expressions compared to Bush's 55.6 percent and Perot's 61.1 percent. Facial expressions where the candidate appears unhappy, worried or tired were infrequent for Clinton and Perot with percentages of 1.9 and 1.4 respectively but photos of Bush appeared in this category 6.4 percent of the time *(see table 4 in the appendix).*

How active the three presidential candidates appeared was significantly different in terms of both their arm and hand behavior. Arm behavior was significant among all three presidential candidates (Cramer's V = .11129, df = 2, $p < .05$). Clinton is seen with his arms at shoulder level or above his head, the most positive position, 41.9 percent of the time compared to Bush's 31.6 percent and Perot's 26.4 percent. Only 51.6 percent of the photos of Clinton showed him with his arms at midbody compared to Bush's 62.0 percent and Perot's 59.7 percent. Hand behavior was also significant among the three presidential candidates (Cramer's V = .14207, df = 2, p < .01). Perot is seen gesturing only 52.8 percent of the time compared to Bush's 73.8 percent and Clinton's 77.4 percent. Likewise, 34.7 percent of the photos of Perot showed his hands at midbody or unseen compared to Bush's 21.4 percent and Clinton's 18.1 percent. Hand behavior where the hands appears at side or rest were infrequent for Clinton and Bush with percentages of 4.5 and 4.8 respectively. Perot had his hands at his side or at rest at a rate of more than double the other two candidates: 12.5 percent of the time *(see tables 5 and 6 in the appendix).*

The contexts the presidential candidates appeared in were significantly different. Setting was significant among the three presidential candidates (Cramer's V = .14639, df = 2, p < .01). Perot is seldom seen in an informal setting - 4.2 percent of the time compared to Bush's 21.9 percent and Clinton's 27.7 percent. It follows that 55.6 percent of the photos show Perot in an unclear setting compared to Bush's 41.2 percent and Clinton's 42.6 percent. Perot was seen in formal settings 40.3 percent of the time, Bush followed fairly closely at 36. 9 percent and Clinton was seen in formal settings 29.7 percent of the time *(see table 7 in the appendix).*

Results indicate that there were differences in how Bush and Clinton appeared in terms of dress. Dress was significant between Bush and Clinton (Cramer's V = .28510, df = 1, p < .000001). Bush is seen in more formal attire 73.3 percent of the time compared to Clinton's 64.5 percent. But 27.7 percent of the photos of Clinton showed him in shirtsleeves compared to Bush's 8 percent. Bush appeared in more informal attire at a rate of 18.7 percent while

Clinton appeared in informal attire only 7.7 percent of the time *(see table 8 in the appendix).*

Interaction, to what extent the figure is seen interacting in the photo, was significant among all three presidential candidates (Cramer's $V = .19175$, $df = 2$, $p < .000001$). The primary difference is Perot: he is seen interacting 37.5 percent of the time compared to Bush's 66.8 percent and Clinton's 73.5 percent. Furthermore, 43.1 percent of the photos of Perot show him alone or not interacting compared to Bush's 22.5 percent and Clinton's 21.3 percent. Photos where the crowd or colleagues are unseen accounted for 19.4 percent of the photos for Perot, 10.7 percent of Bush and only 5.2 percent of Clinton *(see table 9 in the appendix).*

The only other significance and difference found was between the torso behavior of Barbara Bush and Hillary Clinton (Phi = .48536, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). Hillary Clinton appeared standing tall 78.6 percent of the time compared to Barbara Bush's 28.6 percent of the time. Conversely, Hillary Clinton was seen sitting only 21.4 percent of the time compared to Barbara Bush's 71.4 percent.

Significant differences between vice presidential candidates Dan Quayle and Al Gore were not found. There were too few frequencies to make any meaningful comparisons to James Stockdale, Perot's running mate. Comparisons that included Marilyn Quayle, Tipper Gore, Margo Perot and Sybil Stockdale were also hampered by low frequencies.

Discussion

The photographic coverage in the 1992 presidential campaign appears well balanced on the front pages of the newspapers examined. Perhaps most surprising is the preponderance of evidence that suggests that the differences that do appear across these eight newspapers and among political figures are a result of chance: there is no significance among the figures for a particular publication; for the size of the photo they appear in; whether the photo is dominant on the page or not; whether the photo is above, on or below the fold; and the timing of when political figures appeared during the campaign. This suggests editors were thoughtful and tried to provide balanced photographic coverage.

This approach was apparent in many of the newspapers. When the Boston ***Globe*** ran more than one of the presidential candidates on the front page, it consistently ran photos that were the same size and shape and having similar content. The New York ***Times*** ran a photo of Bush and a photo of Clinton on the same day where both of the candidates had their backs to the camera: a good solution if one is concerned with the different impact a photo can have that shows the face of the candidate versus a photo that does not.

The difference of camera angle by candidate may be due to the photographer clearly not having control over where he or she may shoot from all the time. Many situations, whether they are news conferences or bus tours, may have the effect of limiting the photographer's camera angle by design or by happenstance. Photographers and editors do take camera angle into consideration when selecting a photo. But in this particular study, it appeared many of the photos taken from the Democratic National Convention had to be taken from above. This may explain the number of photos in which Clinton appears that are looking down at him.

The number and the pattern of the significant differences of behavior and context suggest these differences had more to do with the political figure's presentation of him or her self than the press' re-presentation. Facial of the quality of the content of the photograph.

What cannot be known from this study is if the overall differences in how the figures appeared in terms of camera angle, behavior and context happened without some influence of the editors involved. What needs to be researched further is if, how and to what extent these attributes influence photo editors' choices and how different segments of the audience perceive these attributes. There can be a lot of information that comes from the images of political figures and this information has the potential to influence the perception of a candidate. Does the perception communicated through the image impact a voter's behavior? Did the fact that Clinton was seen much more often in his shirtsleeves give people the impression that he was more willing to roll up sleeves and get to work? Did more conservative or older Americans respond more positively to the dignified Bush and Perot in their suits? These are some of the questions that need to be asked if photographic coverage of political campaigns is to be better understood.

appeared with Hillary Clinton more than George Bush did with Barbara Bush or Ross Perot did with Margo Perot. But more importantly, the Clintons interacted more with each other resulting in many photos where both were the focus of attention in the photo. This happened less often with the Bushes: Barbara Bush was often in the background when she appeared with her husband. Barbara Bush appeared as less involved in the campaign by her lack of interaction with George Bush and the fact that she appeared in *no* photos as the prominent figure during the official campaign period. Margo Perot had a similar role: she was seen only six times and was never the prominent figure in the photo.

What was unquestionably apparent was the result of Ross Perot's tight control over his media coverage. Because most of his appearances were orchestrated and limited media access to him, he was presented differently by the press especially in terms of context. He was seen alone more, seen in more formal settings and almost exclusively in a suit and tie. The typical campaign photo of Perot presented him alone, behind a lectern where one couldn't see his arms or hands, in a suit and tie, in front of a backdrop of a Perot banner. Images of the other candidates had much greater visual variation.

At the risk of oversimplifying the photo selection process, it could be argued that photos with more cheerful figures, more active figures and more recognizable figures would be the preferred selection. If editors were selecting photos on content alone, and not trying to provide balanced visual coverage, this study's data suggests papers would have run more photos of Clinton and not less. But it may have been no accident that some Associated Press photos received play in more than one paper on the same day because expression, torso, arm, hand, setting, dress and level of interaction all show different patterns of how the candidates may present themselves. It is unlikely that eight newspapers, working independently and separated geographically, would select similar proportions of photos of one person to another or consistently show one person smiling less often. Consider that even though Bush appeared more than Clinton did, Clinton was seen cheerful and confident 99 times while Bush appeared so 71 times. Bush appeared more often as the prominent figure in a photograph than Clinton did. But this does not seem to be a product of Bush drawing attention to himself but rather that he was less often apt to be seen with his running mate and spouse.

Overall, Bill and Hillary Clinton presented themselves more positively than either the Bushes or the Perots. The Clintons were more confident and cheerful, more active, more informal, more casually dressed and more interactive with the people they appeared with. Undoubtedly, this markedly different image of one candidate versus the other two influences the perception of who would make a better candidate. The information contained in the photographic coverage of this campaign suggests Clinton as the natural victor if people select a president based on the confidence he exudes and the appearance of being one of and working with the people. Clinton's candidacy came at a time when the people of the United States were hungry for change and wanted politicians that would *do* something. Clinton's visual presentation of himself seemed to tell the American people he would do something.

Another difference that may influence the perception of a candidate is how that person is seen with and interacting with his spouse. Bill Clinton

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Appendix

Table 1: Frequencies of photos figures appeared in and were prominent in.

	Photos figures appeared in		% of prominence	Photos figures were prominent in	
George Bush	*40.6%*	197	*94.9%*	187	*38.6%*
Bill Clinton	*38.8%*	188	*82.5%*	155	*32.0%*
Ross Perot	*17.3%*	84	*85.7%*	72	*14.8%*
Dan Quayle	*6.8%*	33	*54.5%*	18	*3.7%*
Al Gore	*9.3%*	45	*44.4%*	20	*4.1%*
James Stockdale	*1.9%*	9	*44.4%*	4	*0.8%*
Barbara Bush	*6.6%*	32	*21.9%*	7	*1.4%*
Hillary Clinton	*7.2%*	35	*40.0%*	14	*2.9%*
Margo Perot	*1.2%*	6	*0%*	0	*0%*
Marilyn Quayle	*2.5%*	12	*50.0%*	6	*1.2%*
Tipper Gore	*3.5%*	17	*11.8%*	2	*0.4%*
Sybil Stockdale	*0.6%*	3	*0%*	0	*0%*

Table 2: Frequencies of photos where figures were prominent by newspaper.

	Boston Globe		Chicago Tribune		Christian Science Monitor		Los Angeles Times		New York Times		San Francisco Chronicle		USA Today		Washington Post	
George Bush	20	41.7%	33	38.4%	9	34.6%	20	39.2%	35	42.2%	13	28.9%	23	35.4%	34	42.0%
Bill Clinton	14	29.2%	30	34.9%	11	42.3%	16	31.4%	29	34.9%	13	28.9%	16	24.6%	26	32.1%
Ross Perot	6	12.5%	9	10.5%	4	15.4%	8	15.7%	12	14.5%	10	22.2%	13	20.0%	10	12.3%
Dan Quayle	3	6.3%	3	3.5%	1	3.8%	2	3.9%	1	1.2%	3	6.7%	2	3.1%	3	3.7%
Al Gore	3	6.3%	3	3.5%	1	3.8%	1	2.0%	3	3.6%	2	4.4%	1	1.5%	6	7.4%
James Stockdale	1	2.1%	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	2.2%	2	3.1%	–	–
Barbara Bush	–	–	1	1.2%	–	–	1	2.0%	1	1.2%	–	–	4	6.2%	–	–
Hillary Clinton	1	2.1%	4	4.7%	–	–	2	3.9%	1	1.2%	1	2.2%	3	4.6%	2	2.5%
Margo Perot	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Marilyn Quayle	–	–	2	2.3%	–	–	1	2.0%	1	1.2%	1	2.2%	1	1.5%	–	–
Tipper Gore	–	–	1	1.2%	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	2.2%	–	–	–	–
Sybil Stockdale	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Table 3: Camera angle and the presidential candidates.

	Camera angle		
	Looking down at	Eye-level	Looking up at
George Bush	26 *13.9%*	136 *72.2%*	26 *13.9%*
Bill Clinton	36 *23.2%*	92 *59.4%*	27 *17.4%*
Ross Perot	4 *5.6%*	59 *81.9%*	9 *12.5%*

Cramer's V = .13763, df = 2, p < .01

Table 4: Facial expression and the presidential candidates.

	Facial expression		
	Unhappy, tired, worried	Serious, indeterminate	Cheerful, confident
George Bush	12 *6.4%*	104 *55.6%*	71 *38.0%*
Bill Clinton	3 *1.9%*	53 *34.2%*	99 *63.9%*
Ross Perot	1 *1.4%*	44 *61.1%*	27 *37.5%*

Cramer's V = .19175, df = 2, p < .000001

Table 5: Arm behavior and the presidential candidates.

	Arm behavior					
	At side, at rest or folded		Midbody or unseen		Shoulder level or above	
George Bush	12	*6.4%*	116	*62.0%*	59	*31.6%*
Bill Clinton	10	*6.5%*	80	*51.6%*	65	*41.9%*
Ross Perot	10	*13.5%*	43	*59.7%*	19	*26.4%*

Cramer's V = .11129, df = 2, p < .05

Table 6: Hand behavior and the presidential candidates.

	Hand behavior					
	At side, at rest or down		Midbody or unseen		Gesturing	
George Bush	9	*4.8%*	40	*21.4%*	138	*73.8%*
Bill Clinton	7	*4.5%*	28	*18.1%*	120	*77.4%*
Ross Perot	9	*12.5%*	25	*34.7%*	38	*52.8%*

Cramer's V = .14207, df = 2, p < .01

Table 7: Setting and the presidential candidates.

	Setting					
	Informal		Unclear		Formal	
George Bush	41	*21.9%*	77	*41.2%*	69	*36.9%*
Bill Clinton	43	*27.7%*	66	*42.6%*	46	*29.7%*
Ross Perot	3	*4.2%*	40	*55.6%*	29	*40.3%*

Cramer's V = .14639, df = 2, p < .001

Table 8: Dress and George Bush and Bill Clinton.

	Dress					
	Casual, sport, raincoat		Shirtsleeves, sports jacket		Dignified, suit and tie	
George Bush	35	*18.7%*	15	*8.0%*	140	*73.3%*
Bill Clinton	12	*7.7%*	43	*27.7%*	100	*64.5%*

Cramer's V = .13763, df = 2, p < .01

Table 9: Interaction and the presidential candidates.

	Interaction					
	Alone, others inattentive		Unseen crowd or colleagues		Cheering crowd	
George Bush	42	*22.5%*	20	*10.7%*	124	*66.8%*
Bill Clinton	33	*21.3%*	8	*5.2%*	114	*73.5%*
Ross Perot	31	*43.1%*	14	*19.4%*	27	*37.5%*

Cramer's V = .19256, df = 2, $p < .000001$

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A Case in Cynicism: Network Coverage of the 1992 Presidential Campaign

A Paper Submitted to the
Radio-Television Journalism Division
Association for Education in Journalism
& Mass Communication

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A Case in Cynicism: Network Coverage of the 1992 Presidential Campaign

Media critics and political pundits frequently lament the degree to which the political process is dominated by imagery rather than issues and the role the news media play in perpetuating political artifice rather than fostering political discussion. Many scholars have thoroughly documented and described how the press influences the political process, particularly campaigning.[1] For example, Entman notes:

> The media now provide an overwhelming temptation for politicians and other political figures to engage in demagoguery--a term that has gone out of fashion even as the practice has been virtually institutionalized. Other forces besides the media create incentives for political opportunism. But demagoguery does feed on the biases of news for the simple and symbolic, for the appearance of power and popularity and against any sign of ineffectiveness or public disfavor.[2]

In a critique of political reporting, Auletta voices the same criticism: "So focused on form and entertainment value had we [journalists] become that candidates spent more time devising ways to capture our attention than articulating a plan of presidential action."[3]

According to Taylor, one of the consequences of this kind of discourse is cynicism on the part of all parties involved in the political process, that is, politicians, reporters and the public. And to make matters worse, this relationship is a cyclical one: "The more cynical the news reporters and news consumers have become, the more image-manipulating, demagogic and risk averse the newsmakers have become. And so our cynicism begets their fakery, and their fakery our cynicism, and so on."[4]

If Taylor is correct in surmising that preoccupation with imagery contributes to cynicism, then nowhere should cynicism be more evident than in the reporters and consumers of television news. In regard to the latter, Robinson characterizes their cynicism as "video malaise."[5] He found that the more people depended on television news the more cynical they were about the political process. While this relationship between dependency on television news and cynicism toward the political process is an important one deserving of additional study, it is not the focus of this paper. Rather, this study examines the degree to which television reporters in their news stories reflect cynicism toward the political process, or more specifically, campaigning. Taylor contends that reporters are not only the "chroniclers" of political cynicism, they are also the "carriers."

Symptoms of press cynicism may be exemplified in what Carey describes as "motive explanations." He faults American journalism for its preoccupation with explaining the motives of political actors. In his words: "Motive explanations end up portraying a world in which people are driven by desires no more complicated than greed."[6]

This paper analyzes the degree to which "cynicism" is found in sample ABC, CBS and NBC news reports on the 1992 presidential campaign and examines the possible impact of "cynical" news reporting on the political process. Cynicism was defined as those instances of news coverage in which the reporter stated his or her distrust of a candidate's motives or the political process. By measuring cynicism, this study goes beyond previous research which has largely measured the more general phenomenon of positive and negative press. Cynical reporting, as defined in this study, demonstrates a level of distrust not necessarily found in a reporter's negative evaluations of a candidate or his actions.

Hopefully, by examining the role of cynicism in television coverage of the 1992 presidential campaign, this study can shed light on the struggle between the press and the government and the implications of this conflict for the political process. In Entman's words: "Democracy in the United States is significantly affected by the performance and power of journalism."[7]

Causes of Cynicism

Countless books, articles and opinion polls have examined the increasing apathy and cynicism of the electorate. For instance, a 1992 Gallup poll revealed that Americans have less trust in government today than they did twenty years ago. In 1992, 21% percent indicated that most of the time they trusted the government in Washington to do what was right; however, in 1972, 47% or more than twice as many responded in a like fashion.[8] Furthermore, another 1992 Gallup poll asked Americans whether Watergate was a "very serious matter because it revealed corruption in the Nixon administration, or was it just politics, the kind of thing both parties engage in." 49% responded that it was **very serious**. 46% responded that it was **just politics**. 5% had no opinion.[9]

In the same vein, Taylor suggests that because of the corrupt political policies and actions of the '60s and '70s, Americans became more cynical and television played an important role in their transformation. He observes that "television delivered the news about these policies in a medium--and to a unique new mass audience--where cynicism and anti-institutionalism tend to flourish."[10]

Taylor's conceptualization of the press lends support to the theoretical notion that the news media (albeit for varying reasons) serve as a mirror of social reality or, in more specific terms, reflect the public's cynicism towards the political process.[11] However, an obligation to mirror societal concerns and attitudes is only one professional norm that would contribute to a cynical press. A second is reflected in what Adatto describes as a paradox of television journalism: a need to perpetuate entertaining images and a need to destroy them. In describing 1988 campaign coverage she observes:

> On the one hand, the growing entertainment orientation of network news compelled reporters and producers to get the best possible picture, even if this made them accomplices in artifice; on the other hand, the traditional documentary ambition of television journalism compelled them to puncture the picture, to expose the image as an image.[12]

Levy notes that when journalists are forced because of competition values to cover contrived events, such as political campaigns, a phenomenon called "disdained news" results. In his words:

> Disdained news departs from 'objective' news in that disdained stories frequently contain editorially judgmental words or phrases which clearly suggest the journalist's point of view about the tainted phenomenon.[13]

In essence, these scholars and others suggest that journalists are dependent on political "pseudo-events" or images for their news reports but resentful of their reliance on what they know to be manipulative images.[14] Not surprisingly, this kind of symbiotic relationship might breed cynical reporters. In other words, it is a proverbial case of the dog biting the hand that feeds it.

Important studies of the role of the press in the political process and how the relationship between reporters and politicians can lead to cynicism have been conducted by Adatto and by Clancey and Robinson. In the case of the former, a comparison of campaign coverage of 1968 and 1988, as well as a brief analysis of 1992 coverage, revealed the degree to which television journalism is driven by images.

According to Adatto:

> Those responsible for network coverage in the 1960's maintain that it was different in their day. When television pictures functioned more as documents than as visually compelling images, there was less need for complicity with the campaigns, and also less need to puncture the pictures.[15]

However, the thrust of her research is broad in nature. It focuses on the techniques and consequences of image manipulation rather than the specific phenomenon of press cynicism. Clancey and Robinson took a quantitative approach to measuring press cynicism in their analysis of network coverage of the 1984 presidential campaign. Their methodology of "good press" vs. "bad press" cast a wide net---one that measured "spin" or the degree to which stories might have positive, negative or ambiguous implications for a candidate.[16]

Although their methodology tapped the cynicism found in network news reports, it did not separate it from a more general measurement of positive and negative news coverage. Whereas one might argue that all cynical statements are negative, one could not contend that all negative statements are cynical in nature. For example, it is surely a negative statement or "spin" if a reporter states that many Americans perceive George Bush to be ineffective in solving domestic problems. It is not, however, a cynical statement or one that questions his motives or labels his actions as self-serving.

This case study of network coverage of the 1992 presidential campaign attempts to offer a more specific and quantitative measurement of press cynicism--one that characterizes this phenomenon as something other than "negative" press.

Method

Several research questions guided this research: (1) Will television news reports reflect some degree of cynicism toward the political process and toward political candidates and it will be exhibited in "motive statements" or what Carey has called "motive explanations."[17] These are statements in which the reporter or another source describes the motives of the candidates as being manipulative or self-serving or impugns the general political process. Furthermore, can these motive statements be detected by a content analysis of network coverage of a presidential campaign? (2) Will greater cynicism be expressed toward the incumbent George Bush? Several studies have found network news reporters to be particularly aggressive in their reporting on the incumbent. Clancey and Robinson note: "Reporters feel that they have a special mission to warn Americans about the advantages any incumbent has."[18] (3) Thirdly, will the disaffection of reporters with the political process also be seen in their standups or on-camera appearances? In other words, will there standups be largely negative in tone? Steve Taylor describes this as the standup syndrome. He contends that in standups "all manner of stereotype, slant and speculation may be proferred."[19]

Sample coverage was drawn from the last two months of the presidential campaign or from September 14 to November 2, 1992, the day before the election. This time period was selected because it begins with the week after Labor Day (the traditional kick-off point for the general election campaign) and includes the final weeks of the campaign--a time when reporters are more likely to be quite familiar with the candidates' political positions, policies and techniques and, possibly, as the cliche suggests, more contemptuous of them. The sample was drawn systematically by compiling a list of all campaign stories aired by ABC, CBS and NBC in their early evening newscasts of Monday-

Friday during the sample time period. Then, every other campaign story was selected for analysis.[20] Out of a total population of 395 stories, 186 were selected by using a skip-interval method. Pilot studies were conducted using three independent coders until acceptable reliability was achieved and the authors were satisfied that the coding process and content categories were sufficiently refined. Intercoder reliability scores for all content categories were .90 and above.[21]

The following content categories were used to explore the research questions and measure cynicism. First, coders noted those instances in the story where the reporter or any other source questioned or impugned the candidates' motives or the political process. In other words, the coders were to record those news statements which reflected a tone of cynicism or an attitude of distrust concerning a candidate's real reasons for action. Coders were given the following example of a reporter's motive statement: "By focusing on Clinton's inexperience in foreign affairs, President Bush hopes to divert public attention from the poor state of the economy." Motive statements were recorded verbatim and the source and topic of each statement was noted, that is, whether it related to the campaigns of Bush, Clinton or Perot or to the general political process. If one source had multiple motive statements, then each was recorded separately. In addition, all standups in each sample story were coded according to topic and valence (positive, negative or objective).

Findings

Television News Reflects Cynicism

The results of our content analysis of network coverage of the 1992 presidential campaign suggest that television news reports do reflect cynicism toward the political process and toward the candidates. As Table 1 indicates, we found a total of 150 motive statements. Furthermore, when you separate the sample into stories which were packages (visuals with reporter narration) and those which were anchor readers, you discover that motive statements figured prominently in the sample news reporting. Out of a sample of 186 stories, 64 were brief anchor readers and 122 were longer packages. The former had only 9 motive statements. The latter contained the remaining 141 motive statements or, in other words, on average there were 1.2 motive statements per story. In short, at some point in almost every package, a reporter or another source stated or strongly implied that the candidate's motives were self-serving. Of course, some packages had multiple motive statements while others had none. And in most cases, the source for the motive statement was the reporter. In fact, reporters were the source for 115 or 77% of the motive statements; other individuals (experts, voters, etc.) accounted for only 35 or 23%.

Table 1 also indicates significant differences among the networks in regard to motive statements. These differences were largely a result of NBC having considerably fewer motive statements in the category of general political process than either CBS or ABC.

(Table 1)

The Incumbent Gets the Lion's Share

The results of our content analysis also lend support to our second hypothesis: Greater cynicism will be expressed toward the incumbent. As Table 1 reports, each network was more likely to question or impugn George Bush's motives than those of Bill Clinton or Ross Perot. Of the total motive statements, 44% were directed at George Bush, 23% at Bill Clinton, 22% at the general political process and 11% at Ross Perot. Furthermore, of all three networks, NBC was the most critical of Bush, with CBS running a close second. Some of the motive statements concerning Bush were as follows:

> "When it comes to politics though, Bush's basic decency and moderation sometimes gives way to expediency." NBC, 10/22/92, Reporter Lisa Myers

> "In this game what goes around comes around. Now that the election story is a tightening in the polls, George Bush's tune [in regard to bashing the media] has changed." CBS, 10/29/92, Reporter Mark Phillips

> "Opponents charge that Bush is insisting on including private and religious schools to attract the religious voters--at the expense of public education." ABC, 10/14/92, Reporter Bill Blakemore

Motive statements concerning the Clinton candidacy included:

> "Analysts say the Clinton campaign has a knack for skillful distortions. What we're seeing is the use of small print--creating stories that are actually correct, but are inviting false inferences about Bush's economic policy." NBC, 10/2/92, Reporter Lisa Myers

> "Clinton seems determined to please all the people all the time." CBS, 9/21/92, Reporter Richard Therlkeld

> "Mr. Clinton recently appears to be, as they say, 'playing it safe.'" ABC, 9/18/92, Anchor Peter Jennings

In regard to the candidacy of Ross Perot, motive statements included the following:

> "That kind of promise critics say proves the Texan is all hat and no cattle." CBS, 10/30/92, Reporter Bill Lagatutta

> "Perot's economic package is hard to swallow--even for supporters. That may be why, when Mr. Perot goes on TV, he talks about what a wonderful economic plan he has and never discusses the specifics." NBC, 9/28/92, Reporter Lisa Myers

The fourth category of motive statements, the general political process, included statements like:

> "Rule #1 for this era of soundbite politics: if the problem is big enough and tough enough, the candidates will be talking about something else." CBS, 10/2/92, Reporter Eric Engberg

Standups Are Almost Never Positive

As Table 2 indicates, only one sample reporter standup was positive. The majority or 59% were objective and 41% were negative.

(Table 2)

Table 3 reports that once again George Bush fared the worst in the sample network news coverage. His percentage of negative standups was eight times greater than that of the other candidates. Likewise, there were far more negative standups about him than objective ones. Objective standups about George Bush accounted for 10% of all the standups; negative standups about him accounted for 24%. Objective standups about Bill Clinton totalled 11%; negative standups 3%.

(Table 3)

Furthermore, an additional analysis of only those standups which were objective or negative in nature indicated significant differences in how the networks treated Bush versus the other two candidates. As mentioned previously, the differences are attributable to the much greater negative coverage given Bush.

Discussion

The findings suggest that television journalists do display cynicism toward the political process and that "mediated" or "evaluative" journalism does takes place in political reporting.[22] Despite a professional stance of objectivity, most reporters in the sample stories at some point explicitly stated or strongly suggested that a candidate's motives were self-serving or the political process was decidedly manipulative in nature. For example, the 122 sample news packages averaged a little more than one motive statement per story. These manifestations of cynicism may be interpreted in several ways. First, television journalists may simply be fulfilling their obligation to reflect public opinion concerning the political process and to serve as public watchdog. As mentioned previously, numerous opinion polls point to the fact that Americans have little faith in the political process. Likewise, some journalists suggest that to exclude "motive explanations" or motive statements in their reporting would result in an incomplete picture of political campaigning, and, consequently, a disservice to their viewers.[23]

On the other hand, this reporter cynicism may be more than just a case of the press reflecting public attitudes and providing viewers with a behind-the-scenes analysis of political campaigning. It may be a manifestation of American journalism's disillusionment with the political process and, in particular, with the role of the press in political campaigning. As Adatto and Taylor point out, the press feels that when it comes to political reporting it has gotten on a merry-go-round of imagery and artifice and is seemingly unable to get off. In the same vein, Robert Lichter, Director of the Center for Media and Public Affairs, believes that in their 1992 campaign coverage journalists were determined--even if it meant dropping the conventions of objectivity--to give viewers a look at what is "really happening" in political campaigning.[24] He believes that this prosecutorial-like zeal to expose the reality of the political process is a consequence of reporters resenting the image manipulation and artifice of the 1988 presidential campaign.[25]

This study's finding that the sample television news reports were almost twice as likely to describe Bush's motives as self-serving than those of the other candidates and that reporter standups were eight times more likely to be negative about Bush than either Clinton or Perot is in line with previous studies which measured positive and negative press for the major candidates. For example, the Center for Media and Public Affairs found that in its content analysis of 730 network election stories: "George Bush was the big loser in election coverage throughout Campaign '92."[26] Likewise, in their analysis of debate coverage in two news services and eleven major U.S. daily newspapers, Mead Data Central and PR Data Systems, Inc., found: "News articles biased in favor of President-elect Clinton and Perot numbered greater than those supporting President Bush. Governor Clinton received 44.8% favorable treatment compared to 31.3% for Perot and 23.9% for President Bush."[27]

Critics often use these kinds of findings to suggest a partisan bias on behalf of the press or the liberal leaning of journalists. However, this disproportionate amount of bad press for George Bush may be more indicative of what Entman's calls "popularity bias" and what Clancey and Robinson describe as journalism's double standard for the White House incumbent.[28] In regard to the former, Entman observes the following:

> According to the popularity bias, presidents should enjoy public esteem. When journalists believe a president is unpopular, relatively negative news tends to arise. Journalism's watchdog commitment appears to encourage reporters both to highlight evidence of public coolness toward a president and to convey criticisms of unpopular leaders.[29]

Robinson did not find the networks to be anti-Republican but instead to be largely non-partisan. He posits that Ronald Reagan and George Bush received more negative coverage during their campaigns because they were incumbents--not because they were Republicans. As case in point, Robinson observes that Jimmy Carter suffered the same kind of negative press in 1980 and remarks that journalists

> will work double over-time to find evidence that tars the front-runner or incumbent with things as petty as obscene language or as potentially damaging as Watergate. But that's about all they do."[30]

Conclusion

Several caveats about the findings are worth noting. Although motive statements expressing cynicism were present, they did not account for the majority of television news reporting. Indeed most of the narrative in the sample news reports centered on factual description and blow-by-blow accounts of each candidate's campaign strategy or position on an issue. An average of 1.2 motive statements per television news package indicates this is the case. Clancey and Robinson caution about making too much of findings that point to candidate "spin" or good press or bad press. In their analysis of network news coverage of the 1984 presidential campaign, they found that "74 percent of the total time on network evening news devoted to national candidates had no clear spin--positive or negative."[31] In short, although this study revealed the presence of cynicism in television news reporting, motive statements still account for only a small portion of the overall narrative found in each reporter's package.

Furthermore, this study examined only one campaign and only one medium. In regard to the former, it would be useful to compare network coverage of the 1992 campaign to that of previous campaigns to see if the nature of reporting has changed. In addition, future research needs to include more than just television news reports. Although the authors of this study argue that television--because of its dependence on the image and its emphasis on entertainment values--is an appropriate medium in which to gauge cynicism, newspaper reporters may also display cynicism or include motive statements in what are purported to be objective stories. It would be valuable to know whether cynicism is found in all forms of the elite press.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this study measured the presence of cynicism but did not examine how it might affect an audience. As mentioned previously, Robinson found that there was a positive correlation between an individual's reliance on television news and his or her level of cynicism. Additional research needs to be done which includes not only a content analysis of "cynicism" in the print and broadcast media but also an analysis of how press cynicism affects audience attitudes toward candidates and participation in the political process.

However, this study does lend credence to the prevailing notion that the present political process is characterized by widespread distrust on the part of reporters, the public and politicians, and that distrust finds its way into television news reports. And as Carey contends, when journalists make a habit of relying on motive explanations, all participants in political discourse are likely to suffer:

> Power, wealth, control become the primary objects of people's actions because we assume that everyone is driven by selfish interest. This compulsive explanation excludes

> the possibility that anyone can be motivated by the common good or the public interest. . .[32]

In other words, reporting that is characterized by "motive statements" perpetuates the cynicism found in contemporary politics or the merry-go-round of political artifice and imagery. As long as television news remains preoccupied with imagery and entertainment values in political campaigning, politicians will continue to feel compelled to manipulate symbols, orchestrate images and avoid substantive issues. Perhaps journalists must be the first to step off the merry-go-round. In describing a more constructive form of political reporting, Entman notes:

> If journalists would exhibit less cynicism, elites might allow reporters more leeway to resist and undermine symbolic manipulation without pouncing on them for violating objectivity. Honesty and trust just might grow on both sides.[33]

1. For example, see W. Lance Bennett, The Governing Crisis: Media, Money and Marketing in American Elections (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Eloquence in an Electronic Age: The Transformation of Political Speechmaking (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Neil Postman and Steve Powers, How to Watch Television News (New York: Penquin Books, 1992); Dan Nimmo and James E. Combs, Mediated Political Realities (New York: Longman, 1983); and, Stuart Ewen, All Consuming Images (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

2. Robert M. Entman, Democracy without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 125-26.

3. Ken Auletta, "Loathe the Media," Esquire, November 1992, p. 112.

4. Paul Taylor, See How They Run (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), p.

5. Michael J. Robinson, "Public Affairs Television and the Growth of Political Malaise: The Case of 'The Selling of the Pentagon,'" The American Political Science Review, p. 419.

6. James W. Carey, "The Dark Continent of American Journalism," in Robert Karl Manoff and Michael Schudson, eds., Reading the News (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), pp. 180-81.

7. Entman, op. cit., p. 88.

8. "Trust in Government," The Gallup Poll 1992, p. 103.

9. "Watergate: Twenty Years Later," The Gallup Poll, 1992, p. 105.

10. Taylor, op.cit., p. 246.

11. For a discussion of various models of news content , see Pamela J. Shoemaker with Elizabeth Kay Mayfield, "Building a Theory of News Content: A Synthesis of Current Approaches," Journalism Monographs, 103 (June 1987).

12. Kiku Adatto, Picture Perfect (New York: Basic Books, 1993), p. 3.

13. Mark R. Levy, "Disdaining the News," Journal of Communication, 31:28 (Summer 1981).

14. Daniel J. Boorstin, The Image: A Guide to Psuedo-Events in America (New York: Atheneum, 1971).

15. Adatto, op. cit., p. 90.

16. Maura Clancey and Michael J. Robinson, "General Election Coverage: Part I," in Michael J. Robinson and Austin Ranney, eds., The Mass Media in Campaign '84 (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1985).

17. Carey, in Manoff and Schudson, op. cit., pp. 146-196.

18. Clancey and Robinson, in Robinson and Ranney, op. cit., p. 32.

19. Steve Taylor, "The Standup Syndrome," American Journalism Review, July/August 1993, p. 36.

20. The list was compiled using the complete audio and video transcripts of the respective newscasts. Several air dates were missing from each network sample because of technical problems with the videotaping. For the CBS sample, the following days were not included in the sample population: October 7, October 12, October 15, October 19 and October 26. For the ABC sample, the following days were missing: September 25, October 13, October 19 and October 30. For the NBC sample, the following days were not included: September 23, September 25, September 30, October 6-7, October 12-13, October 19 and October 26-28.

21. Hosti's formula for calculating intercoder reliability was used. See Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick, Mass Media Research (Belmont, California, 1983), p. 154.

22. The authors of this study borrow the term "mediated realities" from Dan Nimmo and James E. Combs. See their work, Mediated Political Realities, op. cit., for a discussion of the role television plays in creating and mediating social and political realities.

23. This study's concept of a motive statement is based on Carey's work and is an adaptation of his terminology for the phenomenon. For a more complete description of what Carey calls a " motive explanation," see "The Dark Continent of Journalism, in Reading the News, op. cit.

24. Robert Lichter, Interview by Andy Bowers, National Public Radio, January 10, 1993.

25. Ibid.

26. "Clinton's the One: TV News Coverage of the 1992 General Election," Media Monitor, VI: 4, (November 1992).

27. "Media Bias Evident in Debate Coverage," Unpublished Report of Mead Data Central and PR Data Systems, Inc., November 1992, p. 1.

28. Entman, op. cit., p. 46 and Clancey and Robinson, op. cit., p. 32.

29. Entman, op. cit., p. 46.

30. Michael J. Robinson, "The Media in Campaign '84, Part II: Wingless, Toothless, and Hopeless," in Michael J. Robinson and Austin Ranney, The Mass Media in Campaign '84, eds., (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1985), p. 39.

31. Clancey and Robinson, op. cit., p. 28.

32. Carey, op. cit., p. 187.

33. Entman, op. cit., p. 131.

TABLE 1
MOTIVE STATEMENTS BY TOPIC AND NETWORK

Topic of Motive	ABC *N=69 #	CBS N=67 #	NBC N=50 #	Total **N=186 #	%
Gen. Pol. Process	12	18	3	33	22%
Clinton	11	10	13	34	23%
Bush	17	22	27	66	44%
Perot	5	5	7	17	11%
Total Motive	45	55	50	150	100%

*N=Total number of sample stories for each individual network.
**N=Total number of stories for all three networks combined.
χ^2=.90 for ABC & NBC (df=3, NS); χ^2=11.74 for CBS & NBC ($p<.01$); χ^2=7.93 for NBC & ABC ($p<.05$).

TABLE 2
DIRECTION OF REPORTER STANDUPS

Valence *N=159	Total For 3 Networks #	%
Objective	91	59%
Negative	63	41%
Positive	1	1%
TOTAL	155	*101%

*N=The total number of standups in the news sample. **Percentage totals more than 100% because of rounding.

TABLE 3
DIRECTION OF STANDUP TOPICS
*N=155

Topic of Standups	Objective #	Objective %	Negative #	Negative %	Positive #	Positive %
Bush Campaign	15	10%	37	24%	0	0%
Clinton Camp.	17	11%	5	3%	1	1%
Perot Camp.	29	19%	3	2%	0	0%
General Pol. Process	24	15%	18	12%	0	0%
Other	6	4%	0	0%	0	0%
TOTAL	91	59%	63	41%	1	**1%

*N=Total number of standups in news sample.
**Percentage totals more than 100% because of rounding.

TABLE 4
DIRECTION OF STANDUP TOPICS BY CAMPAIGN
N=106

Direction	Bush Campaign #	Clinton Campaign #	Perot Campaign #
Objective	15	17	29
Negative	37	5	3

χ^2=12.86 for Bush & Clinton (df=1, p<.001)
χ^2=.94 for Clinton & Perot (NS)
χ^2=27.89 for Bush & Perot (p<.001)

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Crossing the Line:
Constructing "Lesbianism" in the Achtenberg Debate

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In May of 1993, a debate raged for three days in the Senate chambers, marking what its participants proclaimed an "historic" event. With Bill Clinton's choice of Roberta Achtenberg for the position of Assistant Secretary for Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Achtenberg became the first "out" lesbian in history to be nominated for a United States Cabinet post. During the nomination hearing on April 29,[1] and the subsequent Senate filibuster that began on May 20 and concluded on the 24th, the debate over Achtenberg's professional qualifications for the post became intimately tied to her identification as a lesbian, despite the efforts of her supporters to keep her sexual orientation in the background. In its candid discussion of the relevance of Achtenberg's "homosexual lifestyle" to her personal and political competence, the Senate debate offers a rare glimpse of the political and social construction of homosexuality in general, and lesbianism in particular, in process.

As the first openly gay woman ever nominated for the President's cabinet, Achtenberg faced hostility and severe censure from conservative members of the Senate, most notably Senator Jesse Helms and his supporters. During the acrimonious debate that took place on the Senate floor over Achtenberg's nomination, Helms and others expressed their opposition to confirming someone whom Helms had earlier referred to in a newspaper interview as a "damn lesbian."[2] In this way the issue of sexual orientation and its relationship to politics was raised even before the official debate began, setting the tone and the framework within which discussion could occur. The "lesbian issue" was thereby positioned at the forefront of the debate, and the terms and meanings around which the debate took shape--as well as the outcome of the confirmation proceedings--both reflect and (re)produce the cultural meanings surrounding lesbianism.

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[1] The Banking Committee's vote on Achtenberg's nomination took place on May 5, 1993, when it passed 14-4.

[2] This quote from Helms appeared in the *Washington Times* on May 6. During the debate, Helms was asked whether the quote was accurate. He responded, "it does not sound like me, but I may have said it" (S6101).

In this way, the fact that Achtenberg was ultimately confirmed by the Senate tells only the beginning of the story, rather than the end. While in one sense there is a clear victory to be recognized for the gay community in the appointment of a lesbian to the President's cabinet, from other perspectives the confirmation may not send such an unequivocal message as it might at first appear. As Judith Butler remarks, the assertion and affirmation of identity categories, even oppositional categories such as "lesbian" or "gay," is not an unquestionable good, for "identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes," such that "the invocation of identity is always a risk" (1993, 308). The gay rights movement has, without question, achieved significant gains in making gay individuals and issues more visible than ever before, and as a result many gay men and lesbians are able to be more open and comfortable with their sexuality than they have previously been. Yet the act of "coming out," and the figure of the closet that is closely associated with it, is itself problematic and fraught with tension.[3] While the dangers of coming out have been widely acknowledged at the level of individuals, however, at the level of the community gay leaders often imply that the refusal to be closeted, and the greater exposure it affords, is an uncontested good. Butler challenges this stance, asking, "The discourse of 'coming out' has clearly served its purposes, but what are its risks?" (1993, 308).

The question is not simply a rhetorical one, for gay individuals have often realized that whereas hiddenness or "closetedness" has its liabilities, it also carries with it a certain freedom from regulation, and opportunities for self-naming, that are impossible under conditions of visibility. The figure of the closet is generally read in either/both of two ways, as locking oneself safely "inside" and/or as locking something else safely "outside." In fact, closetedness functions in both manners to provide some measure of "safety" for the gay individual as well as the gay community. The act of voluntarily "coming out" (as opposed to being "outted"), interpreted within this framework, marks a willingness both to cease being locked in and to refuse the protection provided by the closet walls.

If the closet is a central figure in the discourse of "coming out," Butler reminds us, then the assertion of an "outside" always reaffirms the existence of a closet: "Being 'out' always depends to some extent on being 'in'; it gains its meaning only within that polarity. Hence, being 'out' must produce the closet again and again in order to maintain itself as 'out'" (1993, 309). The continual recreation of this binary opposition by the figure of the closet prompts Butler to ask, with genuine concern, "we are out of the closet, but into what?" (1993, 309). For this "outside" is always, first, a disappointment, as it inevitably fails to provide the anticipated freedom of total disclosure: "*the closet* produces the promise of a disclosure that can, by definition, never come" (1993, 309). Within this system of meaning, then, there is always another impenetrable space beyond the closet, where ultimate disclosure is deferred indefinitely by the very nature of sexuality, so that "coming out" involves at best a reconfiguration of boundaries that leaves us (re)placed inside and within its walls. Butler questions, "Is the 'subject' who is 'out' free of its subjection and finally in the clear? Or could it be that the subjection that subjectivates the gay or lesbian subject in some way continues to oppress, or oppresses most insidiously, once 'outness' is claimed?" (1993, 308). While the act of "coming out" is inevitably a failure in these terms, and being "out" is thus always something of a disappointment to those on either "side" of the closet, this partial and unsatisfactory disclosure nevertheless renders lesbians and gay men more exposed and highly vulnerable. What is visible is subject to discrimination, regulation, appropriation; that which can be seen and known by the dominant culture may also be (re)labeled or (re)defined by it. In this way the act of "coming out," as an act of making visible, is inherently subject to appropriation and reinterpretation.

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[3] The use of quotation marks around the phrase "coming out," as well as with other related phrases regarding the figure of the closet and the disclosure of sexuality, is intended to problematize the clear delineations at once assumed and naturalized by binary oppositions such as inside/outside and openness/secrecy.

In light of Butler's questions, it is crucial to look the "success" of the Achtenberg nomination in terms of both its liberating *and* its regulating potential, and to examine what impact this high level debate might have on broader cultural constructions of homosexuality. For lesbianism in particular has benefited somewhat from its lack of visibility. Our cultural constructions of sexuality deny that sex is possible without the presence of a penis, and so sex between women is often not strongly condemned or regulated simply because it is not believed, because it is inconceivable or simply nonexistent within our binary system of gender and our definition of sexuality (see Wittig). "Lesbianism is not explicitly prohibited in part because it has not even made its way into the thinkable, the imaginable, that grid of cultural intelligibility that regulates the real and the nameable" (Butler, 1993, 312).

Thus to bring the issue of lesbianism to light in the public manner of a Senate debate is to introduce both an opportunity and a threat to the self-definition of lesbian individuals and the broader gay community. My decision to interpret the discourse of a single historical event follows from Ed Cohen's work on Oscar Wilde. As Cohen argues in discussing the historical significance of the Wilde trial, it can be enlightening to focus "on a single, if highly visible, instance of discursive proliferation in which the structures of meaning . . . were rearticulated" if we recognize that such "contests for the production of sexual meanings . . . provide important opportunities to challenge, if not renegotiate, the public limits on how human (erotic) pleasures can be both embodied and represented" (212). The debate on the Senate floor may be examined as the site of precisely such a contest, where the "victor" is determined by much more than the eventual outcome of the confirmation vote, and the stakes are much higher than one woman's political career. If "coming out" is, as Butler asserts, always a risky proposition, then political discussions of gay issues offer no guarantee "that the instrumental uses of 'identity' do not become regulatory imperatives" (Butler, 1993, 309).

In fact, by establishing one woman as the only (visible) lesbian in the upper echelon of government, that individual attains a representative status through which the group becomes vulnerable (in much the same ways she is) to the benefits and dangers of being "out." The entire question, so highly controversial in the gay liberation movement, of "Which version of lesbian or gay ought to be rendered visible" (Butler, 1993, 311) is sidestepped by the presence of such a highly placed politician, so that this particular representation becomes the ground upon which gay activists must do battle, whether or not they have (or would have) chosen it. The ways in which the promise and the threat of the Achtenberg nomination are played out against one another in the discourse of this particular debate is the subject of this paper.

The importance of the Senate debate is in one sense, as I have mentioned, the very visibility it lends to the presence of lesbians. As Butler has observed, both "gays and lesbians are threatened by the violence of public erasure" (1993, 311), but lesbians in particular are subject to "a political context in which the lesbian does not exist . . . a political discourse that wages its violence against lesbianism in part by excluding lesbianism from discourse itself" (Butler, 1993, 312). While Helms' reference to Achtenberg as "damn lesbian" may seem only to belittle or impede the gay rights movement, the fact of his *recognition* of lesbian existence, even in his explicit condemnation, marks its emergence from invisibility. In earlier anti-gay discourse directed by Helms at the NEA in regard to Robert Mapplethorpe's work, only "gay men exist as objects of prohibition" (Butler, 1993, 312) while lesbians were not even worthy of censure. It may well be that to elicit anger and organized opposition is itself a sign of a group's strong political presence, and the very existence of enemies may be read as a barometer of the threat a group poses to those in power.

It is also possible to see in the Achtenberg debate a microcosm of anti- and "pro-" gay arguments and to analyze both their value and their limitations for achieving their respective political goals.[4] Such issues as the question of whether homosexuality is a choice or a biological given, the artificial bifurcation and isolation of public and private realms, and the historical and contemporary discourses of perversion are all raised within this discussion. Each issue provides a link between political competence and the discourse of sexuality, a pairing that has become increasingly familiar to in the political climate of the 1990's, most notably since the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings in 1991. Most centrally, and underlying each of the other disputes, rests the issue of whether homosexuals are to be held accountable for their sexual identity. This question is raised and almost immediately "resolved" by the debate on the Senate floor, through a minoritizing discourse that equates sexuality with other, previously legislated issues of difference, in a way that at once reflects and participates in the establishment, and mandating, of a narrow and limited conception of homosexuality.

Displacing the Closet

Notably, in the discourse of both supporters and opponents of Achtenberg's nomination, the figure of the closet is displaced by the metaphor of "crossing a line" to describe the liberal invitation, extended to various minority groups at various points in history, to assimilate and therefore attain "heightened" political status. Only one reference is made to the figure of the closet, midway through the three-day debate, and even in that instance the reference is quite vague.[5] In contrast, committee chair Senator Don Riegle introduces the notion of "crossing a line" in his opening statement during the nomination hearing, and repeats it at the beginning of the confirmation proceedings, establishing at the outset the framework within which Achtenberg's "difference" and her accomplishment are to be viewed.

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[4] I have placed "pro" in quotation marks because it is often an inadequate label for those who support the rights of gays to have equal protection under the law. Very often a "pro-gay" position represents a refusal to deny civil rights on the basis of sexual orientation, even if the individual "supporter" personally condemns homosexuality.

Rather than suggesting the act of "coming *out*," the metaphor of a line represents an act of "coming *over*," emphasizing an entrance rather than an exodus. More specifically, while "coming out" leaves ambiguous the nature of the new location, the parameters of the "outside," "coming over" is quite explicit in identifying the site at which the act concludes. "Coming over" clearly indicates the assimilation of that which was other (on the other side of the line) to that which was self (over here, on this side of the line). The figure of a line reifies, to an even greater degree than does the closet, the "opposition" between heterosexuality and homosexuality, naturalizing the distinction so that the line itself seems not humanly constructed, but eternal and irrevocable (i.e., capable of being crossed, but never dissolved). In the closet metaphor, the relationship between inside and outside allows for some complexity, in that the simultaneous implications of "locking in" and "locking out" continually undermine a unified or stable meaning, and make the determination of perspective perpetually undecidable. The metaphor of "crossing the line" substitutes for this intricacy the simplified division of good from bad, included from excluded, which is not coincidentally evocative of the hierarchy designated by the expression "the other side of the tracks."

"Crossing the line" also replaces the ambivalence surrounding the relative gains and losses involved in "coming out" with a clear-cut notion of movement from a worse to a better place, an image of progress and achievement that suggests the unequivocal success of crossing a finish line. It suggests the linearity of a group's progress, in which hard work and good behavior are rewarded by permission to "cross over" into what is presumably a position of greater privilege (and implicitly a position of greater moral rectitude, as suggested by one senator's remark that his job was to consider the appropriateness of the candidate based on "their ethical conflict, if they have any, and whether or not they have any legal problems" (S6092)).[6] Interestingly, while the expression "crossing a line" in everyday language can also signify a transgressive act, this sense of the phrase is virtually absent from its use in her supporters' discourse, who use the phrase only to convey the sanctioned traversal of one who joins the "right" side by invitation, leaving the boundaries intact.[7] In this sense the very possibility of "coming out" as an act of self-determination chosen by gays and lesbians is steadfastly suppressed, replaced by a benign "crossing" in response to the beckoning of the powers-that-be. However, the notion of transgression is both implicitly and explicitly present in the discourse of her opponents, who see her incursion into their territory as unquestionably political and absolutely disruptive to established boundaries.

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[5] In the single reference, Senator Harkin states, "this is one Senator who believes there is more to housing than just closets" (S6200).

Because it tends to reify and simplify complicated meanings, the metaphor of "crossing a line" proves misleading in a variety of ways. At the most obvious level, as mentioned above, the image of crossing a line assumes two distinguishable and distinct sides, each clearly delineated by identifiable boundaries. The image presumes a clear biological differentiation between heterosexual and homosexual, such that "us" and "them" are distributed on respective "sides" with no possibility of confusion, creating an image of perfect otherness that protects those on the "right side" of the line from further engagement or uncomfortable self-questioning. In the service of this view, there exists virtually no sense that biological categories *themselves* are constructed, no recognition that, as Monique Wittig has observed, "what we believe to be a physical and direct perception is only a sophisticated and mythic construction, an 'imaginary formation'" (104). Rather, the distinction is understood to rest upon a strict and presumably "natural" opposition that is at no time called into question.

At a second and related level, the fixing of identity effected by the metaphor suggests that the "line" that is crossed is that of sexual orientation *itself*, rather than that of *visibility*. In this way it (mis)leads us into accepting the narrowest possible definition of homosexuality by suggesting that only self-identified or "avowed" homosexuals *are* homosexual. This interpretation has a dual effect. First, it allows both supporters and opponents to confidently agree that Achtenberg's nomination is unprecedented, thus avoiding the disquieting possibility that closeted gays have held important political appointments both historically and currently. At the same time, it permits the senators to dismiss the challenges that lesbianism poses to patriarchal institutions, by categorizing sexual orientation as simply one more on a growing list of minority characteristics (such as gender, religion, and race) that can be safely absorbed within the powerful structures of such institutions.

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[6] All unspecified page references preceded by an "S" will refer to the text of the *Congressional Record*, May 19-24, 1993.

[7] Even the single exception is one that proves the rule, for although the speaker, Senator Pete Domenici, voted in favor of confirming Achtenberg, his remark voices his opposition. Domenici expresses "serious reservations about this nominee" before concluding that, "while my doubts are great . . . this nominee comes very close to the point but does not cross the line at which I would vote to deny the President a nominee of his choice" (S6355).

Further, the metaphor of "crossing a line" equates the politics of gays and lesbians with that of other minority groups, highlighting inter-group similarities while suppressing distinctive features. Such a discourse negates the specificity of gay and lesbian identities, including such features as "closetedness" and "coming out," in a way that neutralizes the intrinsic challenge that homosexuality presents to heterosexist institutions. At the same time, by explicitly identifying Achtenberg as a representative of lesbians *and* gay men, the metaphor borrows from the closet metaphor a tendency to subsume lesbian and gay men's experience under the broader category of "homosexuality," thus denying each its particularity and difference. This discourse recreates the problem of concealing lesbianism within the male-identified category of "homosexuality," effectively obscuring any connection between lesbianism and feminism, or lesbians and straight women generally. It also denies that the issue of sexual orientation manifests itself quite differently, and evokes quite different responses, than do other minority discourses such as those of gender or race.

Finally, the metaphor of "crossing a line" is misleading in that it fails to acknowledge the ways in which the very categories of identity may themselves entrap those who are fighting gay oppression. Whereas the metaphor of the closet has its own limitations as a means of representing the complexities of homosexual oppression, it does have the advantage of communicating the feeling of being wholly surrounded, and so it hints at the interlocking discourses that impose invisibility and/or mandate hiddenness. As well, it conveys a sense of how enveloped and circumscribed gay individuals and communities are by heterosexual institutions, how their hiddenness places them in a particular "outsider within" status that is not entirely comparable with the experience of other minority groups. To be in a closet is to be sequestered within, rather than exiled without. It is treacherous precisely because it is banishment to a place very close to the oppressor, ***inside the oppressor's very home***, and so it represents a very particular and at times highly contradictory position of marginalization.

In contrast, the notion of "crossing a line" situates the oppressed group at a more distanced position. Moreover, it suggests an understanding of oppression not as a systematic network of obstacles, but rather as a single barrier to be overcome. Having "crossed the line," the barrier is then removed. As an expression of any oppressed group's experience, such a model is misrepresentative and reductive. As philosopher Marilyn Frye observes, "The experience of oppressed people is that the living of one's life is confined and shaped by forces and barriers which . . . are systematically related to each other in such a way as to catch one between and among them and restrict or penalize motion in any direction. It is the experience of being caged in" (4).[8] Frye's elaboration of this point forces us to recognize the *systematic* character of oppression, although her model falls short of adequately capturing the unyielding quality of oppression that persists even when one or more of the barriers are removed.

The metaphor of "crossing a line" frames the Senate debate in a manner that circumscribes the terms in which the entire debate can and does take place. In inscribing a narrow view of homosexuality and assuming the existence of the category itself, such a framework effects the splitting of private (and thus protected) individual identities from public (and therefore regulated) actions, a move that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has identified as characterizing American understandings of homosexuality generally. She identifies an "incoherence couched in the resonant terms of the distinction of *public* from *private* [which] riddles the contemporary legal space of gay being" (47). Commenting on two gay rights cases upon which the same Supreme Court ruled, she argues, "if homosexuality is not, however densely adjudicated, to be considered a matter of *public* concern, neither in the Supreme Court's binding opinion does it subsist under the mantle of the *private*" (47).

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[8] Frye's metaphor of oppression as a bird cage is helpful in examining the limitations of a metaphor that takes a "line" as the representative barrier and "crossing" as the means of escape. She writes:

> "Consider a birdcage. If you look very closely at just one wire in the cage, you cannot see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at that one wire, up and down the length of it, and be unable to see why a bird would not just fly around the wire any time it wanted to go somewhere. . . . . It is only when you step back, stop looking at the wires one by one, microscopically, and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage, that you can see why the bird does not go anywhere . . . It is perfectly *obvious* that the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, no one of which would be the least hindrance to its flight, but which, by their relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon." (4-5).

Thus Sedgwick writes that "To be gay in this system is to come under the radically overlapping aegises of a universalizing discourse of acts and a minoritizing discourse of persons" such that, as the Senate discussion will illustrate, "Just at this moment, at least within the discourse of law, the former of these prohibits what the latter of them often protects" (57). As a result of this "radical and irreducible incoherence" (Sedgwick, 56) in our view of homosexuality, "In the double binds implicit in the space overlapped by the two, at any rate, every matter of definitional control is fraught with consequence" (Sedgwick, 57). This perspective crystallizes Frye's assertion that "One of the most characteristic and ubiquitous features of the world as experienced by oppressed people is the double bind" (2), as it draws the parameters of the particular double bind that immobilizes the gay community and continually undermines what might otherwise be judged as unequivocal progress toward attaining equality.

"Homosexuality" as a "Natural" Category

On the Senate floor, as elsewhere, "homosexuality" is frequently conceptualized as a "biological" category similar to race or sex. As in discussions of race or sex, the biological designation suggests an absolute category, a "natural" and incontestable distinction, and therefore a means through which people can be classified and organized in a purely "objective" fashion. Biological categories are viewed as given, subject to neither social construction nor individual judgment, and therefore unavailable for contestation. They are, moreover, understood to be entirely circumscribed by identifiable and universally recognized boundaries, such that transgressing these boundaries may be indicated by the expression "crossing a line." In the case of sexual orientation, the line divides heterosexuality clearly and absolutely from its opposite, homosexuality.

One of the implications of a biological category is that it refers to a characteristic of an individual agent, a feature of identity rather than a description of that person's actions. In "A Pentadic Analysis of Ideologies in Two Gay Rights Controversies," Barry Brummett offers an analysis of pro- and anti-gay rhetoric in which he notes a fundamental difference in attributions between the rhetoric of gay-rights supporters and that of opponents. In analyzing the rhetoric of gay rights in Dade County, Florida and St. Paul, Minnesota, Brummett observes that whereas the pro-gay rhetoric considers homosexuality to be a characteristic of the individual herself, anti-gay rhetoric such as that of Anita Bryant takes a "love the sinner, hate the sin" approach (Brummett, 257), whereby homosexuality is located in and identified by particular sexual acts, rather than ascribed innately to individual agents.

A similar distinction characterizes the rhetoric of the senators' debate. Achtenberg's supporters hold firmly to a perspective that labels homosexuality a biological, and therefore "private" and protected, category of civil rights. This position follows from the premise that "differences in the body politic stem from unchosen states of being rather than from divisive acts. Given that assumption, the wisest course is to accept the fact of difference and adjust policy to the agents involved" (Brummett, 254). This stance is articulated through the Senate discussion in a number of ways. With this nomination, as noted above, Achtenberg and the gay community she is seen to represent are viewed as having "crossed a line" similar to that which was crossed by the election of Carol Moseley-Braun, the first black woman to become a United States Senator. Senator Riegle remarks, "In a sense, you're crossing one of those invisible lines that we have in our society in terms of . . . sexual orientation," an accomplishment he compares to that of "Carol Moseley-Braun . . . [who] has been the first person in effect to cross the color line" (Hearing, 30). His comparison is given even greater authority by Senator Moseley-Braun's response, in which she states, "You made probably one of the most eloquent statements I've heard . . . about this country and the challenge we face as senators, and crossing the line. I mean, I know from firsthand experience being both a woman and an African-American, what it's like to break the class sealings [sic], and to cross lines that have kept people out." She continues to connect the various forms of prejudice, referring to "racism and sexism and all the isms that divide us and pit us against one another" (Hearing, 31).

In the same vein, Senator Dianne Feinstein implicitly equates discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation with racial discrimination when she alludes to "bleak periods of prejudice and bigotry" in U.S. history and pleads, "Let us not today create another ugly chapter in this country's history" (S6201). Similarly, Senator Lieberman compares strides made to eliminate inequalities suffered by racial minorities and women with the issue "in our time" of discrimination based on sexual orientation (S6212). As Brummett explains, "An important theme in Pro[-gay] rhetoric compares the plight of gays with other, more 'established' minorities: blacks, Jews, Indians, etc. Pros thus argue that gays 'find themselves' in that condition, as do blacks, and must be accepted on those terms" (Brummett, 254). Yet as Lieberman, who supports Achtenberg's nomination despite his disapproval of homosexuality, notes, "This question of discrimination based on sexual orientation is in some ways like the earlier questions of discrimination based on race or gender, but in some ways they are quite different" (S6213).

Within the discourse of the confirmation process, the gains of gays and lesbians precipitated by the nomination are framed as parallel to those of other "similar" minority groups. Senator Lieberman announces that "this is . . . an historic nomination because of Roberta Achtenberg's sexual orientation" (Hearing, 21). Senator Feinstein comments that with Achtenberg's confirmation "the doors of opportunity will open once again," and she urges, "Let us swing those doors open today, once and for all" (S6097). In the double inflection that characterizes much of the language of the confirmation process, the "doors of opportunity" are seen to be opening for Achtenberg as a lesbian in government, and simultaneously for those minority families whom she would serve as Assistant Secretary of HUD.

Achtenberg's supporters point to her capacity for empathy with her constituents, drawing a strong parallel between her situation and theirs: "she knew what it meant to be discriminated against, to be told that you weren't wanted, that you were not the right type of tenant" (Hearing, 20). In this way they promote an identification between Achtenberg and members of "established" (primarily racial) minorities. In several of the Senators' statements the issues of housing discrimination and discrimination against Achtenberg are merged, so that their statements appear to address both issues at once. Senator Barbara Boxer argues, for instance, that "when we confirm Roberta Achtenberg . . . we will be taking a real step forward because we will be saying that discrimination is unacceptable, and we will be saying that the promise of equal opportunity is alive and well" (Hearing, 20). Likewise, Senator Lieberman states that Achtenberg "is superbly qualified to serve . . . as Assistant Secretary of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, and that of course I think is the larger message of equal opportunity that speaks out from this nomination" (Hearing, 21). Both statements leave unclear whether the "promise" and "message" of opportunity accrues to her or to the people she will serve, and this ambiguity strengthens the identification between them.

Like race or religion, which are now protected by law, homosexuality is located by Achtenberg's supporters in the realm of the private, which is discussed as entirely distinct and separable from the public realm: "sexual orientation . . . is essentially a matter of privacy" (S6213). Senator Boxer reinforces this distinction in reassuring the other senators that "Roberta Achtenberg is supported by the mainstream. This is not someone who had dedicated her life to the fringes of our society . . . in her public life . . . she is mainstream" (S6208). Senator Durenberger, likewise, asks rhetorically, "When the Senate considers a Presidential nominee, are we undertaking the task of moral policemen--endorsing or condemning the private conduct of nominees? . . . it is not up to me to judge her *private behavior*" (S6216, italics mine). Boxer and others argue that sexuality should be treated as nothing more than a personal preference, devoid of political significance: "Her private life is about as important to me as her hair color or her style of shoes" (S6353). In this liberal discourse, homosexuality is defined simply as an individual tendency to become sexually involved with members of the same sex, an eccentricity with no implications or significance beyond the bedroom. A doctrine of privacy is invoked which grants Achtenberg the freedom to act as she wishes in private, so long as her politics, her commitment to public life, remain unquestionably "mainstream."

"Lesbianism" as Unnatural Acts

With the exception of Jesse Helms, who is unreserved in his absolute condemnation of homosexuals, Achtenberg's opponents claim that it is her public actions, not her homosexuality itself, that grounds their opposition. At the same time, all of the activities for which they condemn her are explicitly connected to her sexual orientation. The senators are able to uphold these seemingly contradictory claims by calling upon the deliberate separation of public from private maintained by her supporters. This division recalls Sedgwick's identification of a split, evident in Supreme Court rulings, between "the supposedly protected and bracketable fact of . . . homosexuality proper, on the one hand, and on the other hand [the] highly vulnerable management of information about it" (47).

The legal privacy granted to individuals on the basis of sexual orientation *per se* presents Achtenberg's opponents with a potential obstacle; at least one court has ruled "that homosexual *persons*, as a particular kind of person, *are* entitled to Constitutional protections under the Equal Protection Clause" (Sedgwick, 57). Nevertheless, the Supreme Court has resolutely refused to offer the same sort of protection for homosexual *acts*. Sedgwick observes, "The Supreme Court in *Bowers v. Hardwick* notoriously left the individual states free to prohibit any acts they wish to define as 'sodomy,' . . . with no fear at all of impinging on any rights, and particularly privacy rights, safeguarded by the Constitution" (57). Such a ruling presents an potent opportunity for attacks based on homosexual behavior, broadly defined. This division of agent from act and private from public sets up a dichotomy through which one's protection as a homosexual does not extend to any acts one might perform under the aegis of such an identity.

This distinction is captured in the different connotations of the term "homosexual" and the terms "gay" and "lesbian." As James Cheseboro explains, "The word 'homosexual' draws attention primarily to an overt biological and sexual release that gains its specificity because the release occurs between two members of the same sex. With this release as a central definitional base for research, the consequential social behaviors and responses to those behaviors are examined predominantly as extended by-products of the sexual and biological release" (Cheseboro, 138). He notes that:

> "In contrast . . . The word 'gay' identifies those who have adopted a particular *world view* or perspective of reality which is *self-imposed* and a *self-defined* determinant of the attitudes, beliefs, actions, and even the vocabulary affecting human interactions. Thus, the words 'gay' specifies a kind of *consciousness* controlling personal identities, social predispositions, and anticipatory orientations . . . the word 'gay' is also associated with the activities of the gay liberation movement; the word thus carries the connotations of a *positive self-image* involving a sense of *pride* and *power* in a potential or actual *confrontational* context." (138)

This distinction makes possible the assertion that "not all 'homosexuals' . . . satisfy the self and group identity requirements specified by the word 'gay'" (Cheseboro, 138). "Gayness" or "lesbianism," as the "public face" of homosexuality, is perceived within this system of meaning as absolutely chosen, and implicitly confrontational. In this way gays and lesbians are seen by their detractors as placing themselves outside the realm of Constitutional protection and are held accountable for what is viewed as voluntary nonconformity and rebellious behavior.[9]

Achtenberg's opponents use the homosexual/gay (or private/public) split as a means of expressing their disapproval of Achtenberg based on her "lifestyle" while seemingly maintaining a stance of sympathy toward her minority identity. Opponents to Achtenberg's nomination for the most part claim that they do not object to her homosexuality. For example, having referred to Achtenberg as "neither qualified nor temperamentally fit for this position," and having a record "of intolerance, discrimination, and vendetta against those who do not share her values and beliefs," Senator Trent Lott says, "I want to reemphasize that the issue before us today is not one of sexual preference or orientation" (S6093). Later he concedes, "my problem is not *just* with her lifestyle" (S6180, emphasis mine).

In a similar statement, Senator Cohen announces that while he will not support Achtenberg's nomination, "I am not opposed to the nominee because she is an announced lesbian. That is of no consideration to me. Her sexual orientation is not a factor, in my judgment" (S6211). Achtenberg's opponents insist that her public actions, and not her sexual identity, call into question her competency for the position. Lott describes the issue of "temperament" by asking, rhetorically, "Is she tolerant of the views of others? Can she administer her duties fairly and without bias? Or will she be a militant extremist promoting a narrow special interest agenda?" (S6093). In this way, the split between homosexuality and gayness, private and public, marks a split between Constitutionally protected "identity" and unprotected "actions," the latter providing something of a dumping ground for the unexpressed and inexpressible discourses generated by the former.

By evoking, explicitly or implicitly, the category of "lesbian," the undesirable qualities associated with homosexuality can be displaced from a realm that is protected onto a realm that is not. Achtenberg's behavior is referred to again and again as indicting her, and it is spoken of as though it were a matter entirely separate from her identity. Senator Bob Dole states that "we must show respect and tolerance for those among us who happen to be gay. But showing tolerance and respect should not force us to embrace an ideological agenda that most Americans do not accept" (S6348). Senator Murkowski argues that "Ordinarily . . . questions of personal life or lifestyle would not be at issue. However the nominee goes beyond the point of just choosing a lifestyle, but, in fact, advocates her lifestyle forcefully, as an activist. What disturbs me is that she promotes that lifestyle and suggests it represents family values" (S6169). He insists, bluntly, that "her activism is inappropriate . . . and therefore I feel it is necessary that I vote against the nominee" (S6170). Murkowski associates Achtenberg's difference with her political activism and (resulting) poor judgment rather than her identity. "I think that we all have an obligation to some degree for conformity within bounds . . . If we are too out of conformity, if we wonder [sic] around imposing our views on others in an offensive way, somebody is going to say, hey, you are a little out of line . . . There are certain bounds within which we should be expected to conform" (S6169).

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[9] Darsey quotes a character from Ethan Mordden's novel *Buddies*, who says, "Don't you realize that no one in America cares whether or not you're quietly homosexual? It's the gay stuff they hate, that's all" (Darsey, 63).

The discourse of non-conformity or outright perversion often used to condemn "homosexuality," but inaccessible to the senators in this protected realm of identity, is shifted instead onto the category of "lesbian" behaviors which remain available for critique. For example, in a discussion on the first day of the debate, Senator Lott quotes a newspaper editorial which purportedly refers to Achtenberg as having a "twisted mind" and "tearing down what is good and wholesome in others" (S6093).[10] Achtenberg's "twisted value system" is characterized later by Senator Smith as a "menace to society that needs to be quashed," as illustrated by her refusal to support the closing of San Francisco's gay bathhouses after the outbreak of AIDS (S6215).

Likewise, Senator Thurmond states, "I would like to note that my opposition to Ms. Achtenberg's nomination lies not with her personal lifestyle but with her radical activism in pursuing her own political agenda" (S6218). An article in the *Washington Times* on May 24 quotes Martin Mawyer, president of the Christian Action Network, taking the distinction between "homosexual" and "lesbian," the split between private and public, one step further, to bifurcate the latter terms into two meanings with still greater specificity: "We're not opposed to gays and lesbians holding federal office, but her performance in that [San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Pride] parade is evidence *she's a lesbian activist, not just a lesbian*" (S6333, italics mine). In addressing the issue of Achtenberg's activism, we reach a key point in the controversy over her nomination, as her political activities become the site of displacement for her opponents' negative responses, the reservoir for their suppressed attitudes toward her unacceptable (sexual) behaviors that are at all times implied but always unstated within the context of this debate.

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[10] This quote is later found to have been misattributed and, as Senator Don Riegle subsequently points out, is in fact taken from a letter to the editor in that same paper and not from an editorial. In response to this misattribution, the *Chronicle* printed an editorial, dated May 20, in which it explicitly endorsed Achtenberg's nomination (S6177).

Among Achtenberg's opponents, only Jesse Helms refuses outright to maintain the public/private split, condemning equally "homosexuality" and "lesbianism." Helms appropriates the metaphor of "crossing the line" in articulating his concerns: "Any Senator who assumes that this is not a national issue should be advised that it is. Not because it is just a nomination, but because we are crossing the threshold into the first time in the history of America that a homosexual, a lesbian, has been nominated . . . for a top job in the U.S. Government. That's is what the issue is" (S6099). While this quote indicates that her very identity is "the issue," he later identifies "the issue" as her behavior, suggesting that he draws no distinction between identity and actions: "That is what this issue is. . . how she has acted in public" (S6207). While taking a less provocative stance, Senator Domenici also cautions against a too-severe delineation between public and private spheres, arguing that "nominees do not come neatly sliced--they come as a whole loaf. Their personal value systems and their professional capabilities cannot be compartmentalized" (S6354). He continues, "The debate on this candidate portrays clearly that professional expertise and private values are not easily separated or seen in isolation of one another. They are, instead, intricately intertwined" (S6355).

Most of the senators carefully avoid using the word "lesbian" at all, their discomfort with the term sometimes resulting in obscure or convoluted speech. In a striking example of one such verbal contortion, committee chair Riegle says to Achtenberg, "I think it's important that we separate what's important from what isn't, in terms of you here as a nominee, and the fact that you may be the first person to come and to sit in a nomination seat in a situation, such as you do" (Hearing, 30-31). Senator Cohen also seems disinclined to use the term and attempts what is no doubt intended to be a more neutral approach: "she has a sexual orientation that is not followed by a majority of people in this country" (S6212). Jesse Helms is one senator who is willing to use the word, but with no one actively contesting his usage[11] the term assumes the negative connotations with which he endows it, ultimately sounding like a curse itself: "damn lesbian," "militantly activist lesbian" (S6352). While others talk around the word, and around the issue in its entirety, Helms uses the term repeatedly. Whereas "homosexual" becomes a depoliticized term in this discussion, just the opposite effect occurs for "lesbian," as it becomes in itself a threatening category imbued with strong political overtones. It refers not to the individual agent, but to the sum of her (public) actions, and marks "crossing the line" as an act of transgression, as Senator Helms does when he remarks, "the President of the United States has crossed a line and has nominated a lesbian for high Government office" (S6207), and as Senator Gorton does when he argues that "There is a crucial distinction between legitimate advocacy . . . and a hostile and irresponsible intolerance . . . between spirited advocacy and punitive harassment. Ms. Achtenberg crossed this line" (S6349).

Despite the attempts of both supporters or opponents to deny the relevance of Achtenberg's private life, the centrality of sexual orientation to the tenor of the debate did not go entirely unnoticed or unmentioned. The *San Francisco Chronicle* of May 20 observed bluntly, "Much of the Senate hearing into her nomination has not involved her qualifications to serve, but her sexual orientation" (S6177). Senator Lieberman likewise observed on the second day of the debate that "the question of discrimination based on sexual orientation . . . is not explicitly on the line in this nomination but it is, in my opinion, implicitly on the line" (S6212-3). In her closing statement on the second day, Senator Boxer concurs: "We know what this is all about . . . It is not about qualifications. It is not about tolerance. It is not about demeanor. It is not about those things. It is about a private lifestyle that some feel disqualifies this woman" (S6223). When the Senate returns to the issue three days later, Senator Riegle reiterates her view, noting that "I think the only real challenge against this nominee boils down to her sexual orientation . . . I believe all the other arguments that have been raised here are a smokescreen" (S6349-50). Boxer echoes his comment, remarking, "this kind of name-calling is a smokescreen for disapproval of her private life" (S6350). Senator Feinstein, too, supports the view that "The focus has not been on her qualifications . . . Instead, critics have tried to use Roberta's sexual orientation to deny confirmation" (S6351). While such statements are undoubtedly true they also greatly simplify the situation. In fact, the discourse of perversity is smuggled into various challenges to Achtenberg, so that not only her lesbianism *per se*, but in addition her (resulting) inadequacy *as a woman*, are viewed as the bases for poor judgment and a perceived failure to conform to the imperatives of political propriety.

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[11] Only two other senators, both Achtenberg supporters, use the word "lesbian" at all. Senator Feinstein (S6201) and Senator Kennedy (S6220) each use it once, but neither instance undermines the negative connotation attributed by Helms.

"Lesbianism" as Failed Womanhood

If lesbianism is linked to rebellious behavior and poor judgment, it is additionally and unsurprisingly associated with insufficient femininity. Achtenberg is repeatedly criticized for actions which are seen as falling outside the range of acceptable "feminine" behavior. She is represented at various places in the text as either embodying too many of the negative stereotypes of women, or conversely, as exhibiting insufficiently feminine behavior overall. At times Achtenberg's opponents condemn her behavior by characterizing her as a stereotypical "bad girl," who in her selfishness will go to any lengths to get what she wants. In an article from the *Chicago Tribune* that was submitted to the *Congressional Record*, the writer states "Achtenberg articulated her willingness to rely on economic terrorism to *get her way*" (S6094, italics mine). In describing her decision to attempt to override a veto, the *San Francisco Chronicle* declares, "Achtenberg vowed revenge" (S6095), while the *San Francisco Examiner* describes her response to a vote by stating, "Achtenberg was defiant to the end" (S6095). In a similar tone, Jesse Helms describes "the ire of this woman" in responding to a conflict with the Boy Scouts, insisting that "She wanted to grind them under her feet" (S6099). He characterizes Achtenberg as "pushy, demeaning, demanding; she is a mean person, mean-spirited" (S6100).

Achtenberg's behavior is frequently characterized by her opponents in such negative and stereotypically feminine ways. For instance, she is depicted as being irrational and enslaved to her emotions. Senator Bond comments, "Ms. Achtenberg has a tendency to let her passions and ideological inclinations overshadow her judgment" (S6176). Senator Nickles concurs, "She has been so adamant in her belief and her activism that her judgment and impartiality are clouded" (S6210). At other times, she is condemned for not being feminine enough. Senator Lott criticizes her because "she has not been just a *passive* lawyer . . . She has been an *aggressive* activist in representing a lot of extremist positions" (S6179, italics mine). Still elsewhere, her opponents employ language that explicitly infantilizes her. In one example, Senator Simpson states, "I am not personally convinced that Ms. Achtenberg has demonstrated that level of maturity, objectivity, and fairness as to warrant my support of her confirmation to this important position" (S6355). On another occasion, Helms refers to her demeaningly as a "lady" whose "little resolution" was vetoed (S6101).

Achtenberg's supporters, while emphasizing her positive qualities, also focus on traits that are stereotypically feminine, especially her nurturance and her skill at gaining cooperation from various people. Senator Feinstein remarks that those who know Achtenberg best "know her as a sensitive individual, a caring individual. We also know her as a rather quiet individual" (S6200). Senator Boxer notes, "Roberta Achtenberg is a healing person. She brings people together." She highlights in particular Achtenberg's "abilities to bring people together, to solve problems, to build coalitions, to listen to all sides" (S6092), and rejects Jesse Helms's characterization of her, arguing that "She is a good person . . . she is not pushy and she is not demeaning and she is not demanding and she is not mean" (S6115). She quotes from a letter to defend against a negative female stereotype: "Roberta is neither shrill nor uncompromising" (S6116). Finally, Boxer characterizes the Senate debate, in brief, as an act of "tearing down a good woman" (S6208).

The Gay Agenda

The argument of Achtenberg's opponents that lesbians and gay men seek to "promote" their "lifestyle" by imposing their own political agenda invokes a conspiracy theory fashionable in some right-wing political circles: that the gay community is attempting to enforce, in organized and systematic fashion, a secret agenda upon unsuspecting Americans and particularly on susceptible American youth. While the accusation of a conspiracy is never explicitly put forth in this debate, it is invoked implicitly by some of Achtenberg's opponents, with Achtenberg herself seen as a leader of these subversive forces. Senator Grassley, for example, accuses Achtenberg and gays generally of "forcing homosexuality upon those who oppose this lifestyle and all it entails" (S6354). Senator Helms likewise insists, "The homosexual community is trying to ram their way of life down someone else's throat" (S6207). This "way of life" and its representatives are viewed most negatively as insidious and utterly destructive. In this context, Achtenberg is characterized by Senator Smith as "one who, if she had her way, would shut down all the Boy Scout troops in America and replace them with sex clubs festering with disease" (S6216).

In representing gays and lesbians as opposing and undermining mainstream societal values, opponents insist that Achtenberg cannot be trusted to enforce laws without becoming an advocate for gay rights: "the nominee would use the power of her office to discriminate and punish those which [sic] disagree with her" (S6093). They argue that "Ms. Achtenberg intends to use this post as a platform from which to push her radical agenda" (S6216), exploiting her influence "to force cities and counties to enact special rights and affirmative action plans for homosexuals" (S6093). This tendency is construed through an interrogation of her actions, which are portrayed as threatening to the values and beliefs of the "mainstream" (read heterosexual) culture.

Achtenberg's conflict with the Boy Scouts is the example used repeatedly by her opposition to illustrate the threat she poses to "American" values. Achtenberg served on the Board of Directors of the United Way of the Bay Area, which had a policy requiring the organizations it funded to practice nondiscrimination based on "race, national origin, gender, age, status of having been involved in military service, marital status, sexual orientation, disability and the like" (Hearing, 36). It came to the Board's attention that the Boy Scouts, a recipient of United Way contributions, refused to provide services for gay or bisexual boys, and prohibited openly gay men from becoming scout leaders. The United Way then directed a task force (of which Achtenberg was not a member) to investigate the matter. The task force reported to the Board that the charges of discrimination were true. The Board then voted unanimously to cease funding the Boy Scouts organization unless and until it changed its rules to provide services for all boys on a non-discriminatory basis (Hearing, 36). In addition, Achtenberg introduced a resolution to transfer $6 million of city money out of the Bank of America, which continued to fund the Boy Scouts despite their discriminatory policies. Achtenberg is also accused of urging the San Francisco School board to bar the Boy Scouts from using public school facilities (Hearing, 36-37), although this charge is not borne out by the evidence introduced at the hearing or entered into the *Congressional Record*.

Achtenberg's opponents argued repeatedly that her "efforts to destroy the Boy Scout troops in the San Francisco Bay Area" (S6215) represent a "vendetta" (Hearing, 79; S6093; S6222) and confirm their accusations of both perversity and poor judgment. She is reproached for being "more than a critic. She has been the ringleader of an ideological crusade to remake the Boy Scouts in her own image" (S6348). One quote from Achtenberg, taken from the Associated Press in August of 1991, is repeated seven different times in the transcript of the debate. The quote reads, "Do we want children learning the values of an organization that provides character building exclusively for straight, God-fearing male children?" Her attitude toward the Boy Scout organization is characterized by Senator Smith as that of a "Scoutophobe . . . hacking away at the values held by Boy Scouts" (S6216). The Boy Scouts are represented as the embodiment of all that is admirable about heterosexual masculinity (and by extension, heterosexuality in general), and all that is presumably attacked by Achtenberg's politics: "The Scouts teach young men to value important things, such as honor, integrity, honesty, duty, God, country, and family" (S6215). Thus Achtenberg's statement is interpreted as a rejection of that which is good and right about a patriarchal America. Jesse Helms argues, "The Scout oath says 'On my honor as a Scout, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.' . . . These are the values that were--and still are--under assault" (S6206). As Senator Lott states, "This lady is not attacking some extremist group, for heaven's sake. She is going after the Boy Scouts. She might as well be going after motherhood" (S6180).

In contrast to the equation of heterosexuality with the clean-cut image of the Boy Scouts, homosexuality is represented by the sex clubs or bathhouses that Achtenberg fought to keep open at the beginning of the AIDS crisis, and by the values associated with them: "Sex clubs encourage anonymous sex, promiscuity, unsafe sex and the spread of AIDS" (S6352). Achtenberg's one-time support of these clubs is presented as further evidence of her perversion, and of the kind of America she would impose given the chance, as "a radical liberal who is hostile to the values held by the Boy Scouts yet would fiercely defend promiscuous, dangerous sex" (S6216). Despite the fact that lesbians themselves did not participate in the bathhouse culture, Achtenberg is seen as doubly implicated both by her membership in a subculture that perpetuated in the immoral lifestyle of the bathhouses, and by her decision as a politician to try to keep them open. Senator Smith claims Achtenberg is "the only" American who could believe that "the Boy Scouts are an insidious group bent on undermining society while sex clubs are a valuable institution that provides important cultural stability" (S6216). Jesse Helms refers to her as a "militantly activist lesbian" in the same sentence that he discusses her refusal "to shut down the so-called public bathhouses in San Francisco, where hoards [sic] of homosexuals were engaging in their perverted activities" (S6352). On another occasion, he condemns "the *pornographic* and *blasphemous* activities during last year's San Francisco Gay Pride parade" which he claims was "led" by Achtenberg and Morgan (S6332, italics mine).

Helms's reference to blasphemy alludes to another standard Christian argument that homosexuality is prohibited by the Bible, and that homosexual acts (and in the minds of some, homosexuals themselves) are inherently sinful. It is hardly surprising, then, that both opponents and supporters attempt to stake a claim to the influential issue of religion. Supporters deny what they perceive as "implications that Roberta Achtenberg does not love God" (S6116), portraying Achtenberg as "a Jewish woman . . . [who] freely professes her own belief in God" (S6179) and who is actively involved in her synagogue (S6091, S6116). They emphasize, "Roberta is deeply respected by the Jewish community in San Francisco and is greatly admired as an advocate for civil rights and for Jewish concerns" (S6114).

In contrast, opponents quote her favorable comments about the organization Act Up to adduce her endorsement of "harassment and terrorism of Catholics and other religious groups," and cite her participation in a gay pride parade as evidence of her intolerance toward those who hold religious views (S6094). Senator Lott argues "Roberta Achtenberg has participated in events and parades where those with religious views were ridiculed and parodied." To illustrate his point, he cites "a San Francisco parade where she was an honored guest and participant, [where] there were graphic depictions of God sodomizing Uncle Sam while a Boy Scout looks on" (S6094). This single illustration brings together the claims, expressed implicitly and explicitly throughout the debate, that Achtenberg and the entire gay community are subversive to America, menacing to the traditional values embodied by the Boy Scout organization, and perhaps most importantly, hostile to God and his believers.

Conclusion

During the Achtenberg nomination hearing and confirmation debate, contests over the meaning(s) of "homosexuality" and especially "lesbianism" provide vivid illustrations of the role of politics and power in creating the categories and providing the framework(s) within which we define "experience" and organize knowledge. Such contests serve as often startling reminders of the degree to which "our" identities, and the identities of "others," are constructed within and through the interlocking social, political, legal and historical discourses as they intersect with the accidents of our personal histories.

In the case of Roberta Achtenberg, the significance of this single event lies both in its positioning as an "historic nomination" (Hearing, 21) and the perception of Achtenberg as representative of "homosexuals" as a class. While on one level the debate can be said to conclude with Achtenberg's confirmation, in fact this debate produces a multiplicity of results ranging beyond this particular historical site or moment. For the participants and audience in this debate are American lawmakers and the American body politic, collectively, and the "outcome(s)" of the debate must be judged not (only) on Achtenberg's personal success, but on the ways in which the discourse of this historic moment creates at once a broadening *and* a narrowing of possibilities for a burgeoning gay rights movement.

Ironically, these two contrary outcomes are not produced respectively by Achtenberg's supporters and opponents. Rather, the discourse of *each* group effects *both* consequences. Both supporters and opponents invoke the metaphor of "crossing a line," which creates the boundaries of a group identity by defining them through "difference," yet simultaneously invites their participation (if not full inclusion) in sameness. Where their arguments diverge, supporters of Achtenberg "mainstream" her as much as possible, downplaying and radically depoliticizing lesbianism. Caught in a double-bind, their means of creating a liberating discourse--one that will win confirmation for a publicly identified lesbian--relies upon their ability to uphold the category of "homosexuality" while restricting it to its least threatening (and thus most limited) definition. Their position calls for a resolute underscoring of sameness and the associated denial of difference. While Achtenberg's opponents take the opposite approach, presenting "homosexuality" as politically radical and extraordinarily subversive, they do so by denouncing it as "perverse" and "twisted" without any of the theoretical self-reflexiveness of those who are self-labeled as "queer."

Finally, the social changes that can be identified with "gay liberation" will inevitably be as contradictory as the phrase itself, as every effort to be free of the confines of categorization only (re)creates a new set of "regulatory imperatives." The invocation of identity in an effort to free oneself of its limitations is an act with both the clear promise of (qualified) success and the inevitability of (limited) failure. To free oneself is always to subject oneself again, though differently perhaps, a repositioning rather than a release. Like the closet metaphor itself, "liberation" is always undecidable, as "locking oneself in" bears a closer and closer resemblance to being "locked out." For Roberta Achtenberg, and for those who aspire to her honesty and achievement, it is crucial to remain constantly watchful of the forces that construct our meanings, most especially those meanings through which we tell ourselves who we are, and who we can become.

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GENDER AS A FACTOR IN NEWSPAPER DISCLOSURES ABOUT THE PRIVATE LIVES OF POLITICIANS:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NEWSROOM MANAGERS

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GENDER AS A FACTOR IN NEWSPAPER DISCLOSURES ABOUT THE PRIVATE LIVES OF POLITICIANS:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NEWSROOM MANAGERS

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An earlier report about other findings from this study, "Reporting on Private Affairs of Public People: A Study of Newspaper Practices," was presented to the AEJMC Southeastern Colloquium in Charleston, S.C., in April 1994 and will be published in the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* later in 1994.

ABSTRACT

GENDER AS A FACTOR IN NEWSPAPER DISCLOSURES ABOUT THE PRIVATE LIVES OF POLITICIANS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NEWSROOM MANAGERS

Sigman Splichal and Bruce Garrison, University of Miami

This paper reports the results of a national study of daily newspaper newsroom managers and their views about coverage of the private lives of political leaders such as candidates for national office. The focus of this analysis is upon differences between male and female newsroom managers. Data were collected in spring 1993 during a national telephone survey about ethics policies and privacy practices of daily newspapers. A total of 283 newspapers responded, a rate of 70 percent. The hypothesis that there would be differences in how male and female news managers viewed privacy ethics situations was not supported. In only three of the 15 measures of privacy and ethical behavior did the study determine significant differences in gender. For the most part, male and female news managers did not see specified situations involving privacy and news judgment differently.

GENDER AS A FACTOR IN NEWSPAPER DISCLOSURES ABOUT THE PRIVATE LIVES OF POLITICIANS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NEWSROOM MANAGERS

Much has been written about the proper bounds of coverage of private lives of politicians since *The Miami Herald* disclosed that presidential contender Gary Hart had spent a night with a woman who was not his spouse. Following *The Herald's* disclosures, critics of the newspaper's newsgathering methods and subsequent stories abounded, both inside and outside the journalism profession. Some commentators responded harshly. For example, Anthony Lewis, columnist for *The New York Times*, said he felt "degraded in my profession" (Buckley, 1987, p. 55). Bill Kovach, then editor of the *Atlanta Journal*, echoed similar concerns about *The Herald's* gumshoe tactics: "To me, that is a technique for police, not journalists" (Zoglin, 1987, pp. 28-29). But not all comments were negative, especially as focus shifted away from *The Herald's* reporting practices and the issue of adultery to the broader issue of the "character" of a man who would be president. Howard Simons, head of the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University and former managing editor of *The Washington Post*, defended *The Herald* (Zoglin, 1987). *The New York Times*, notwithstanding the chagrin of Anthony Lewis, later editorialized in support of *The Herald*:

"*The Herald* acted on the basis of information from a confidential source that turned out to be substantially accurate. It did so in a larger context . . . that character, not philandering, is the issue . . . . The issue [of Hart's character] reflecting centrally on the candidate's judgment and integrity, is one that many, perhaps most, journalists would have pursued. Sordid fishing expeditions for scandal are one thing; this story concerns the public interest" (Buckley, 1987, p. 55). Ultimately, *The Herald* won support and accolades from the newspaper profession for its reporting of, among other things, the Gary Hart affair (Associated Press, 1988).

Regardless of one's position in the debate over the propriety of *The Herald's* reporting and ensuing debate over the proper bounds of reporting about private lives of politicians, a threshold appears to have been crossed. As Editor Ben Bradlee of *The Washington Post* put it after the initial debate over the Hart disclosures: "The rules have changed" (Zoglin, 1987, p. 28).

What rules now govern reporting about the private lives of politicians and political candidates? Do editors agree on the bounds of proper coverage? Do male and female editors differ on any issues? With these questions in mind, a study was undertaken to gauge how newspaper editors would respond to several situations dealing with disclosure of private information. Particular attention was paid to possible differences in responses between men and women editors. Gender comparisons were based on the assumption--- part of the basis for newsroom diversity efforts--- that women bring to the editor's job different values and sensitivities.

RATIONALE FOR NEWSROOM DIVERSITY

In both television and newspaper newsrooms in the early 1970s, the ratio of men to women was four to one. Ten years later, the proportions had changed somewhat. There were only two men for each woman in the newsroom. In recent years, that two-to-one proportion has not changed. With increasing numbers of women studying journalism--- there have been more women than men majoring in journalism in colleges for a decade and a half--- the proportion of men to women could continue to move toward parity (Hess, 1991). These changes have significant management and news decision making implications, especially as women move up in the newsroom hierarchy.

Marlene Sanders, a former network television correspondent, once posed an interesting question before a gathering of news media professionals. Her comment addressed white male dominance at the top of most news operations, and invoked the assumption that the "gatekeepers" of news bring different perspectives to the job. Observed Sanders:

"I don't think anyone would argue that on-air women are better looking than on-air men. Local anchor teams look like most men's second marriages . . . Do women holding top jobs really make a difference . . . . Or do they, like men, look at the ratings and let them decide?" (Stepp, 1990, p. 44).

Do women in management roles make a difference? The newspaper industry generally accepts this reasoning, at least with respect to newspapers' formal policies. Consequently, improving newsroom diversity is a goal of managers at many daily newspapers, from large metros to their small-town counterparts. Policies aimed at increasing the number of women and minorities reflect the realities of the marketplace. The underlying assumption is that certain issues are better understood by individuals who share interests and values related to those interests. In short, improving staff diversity better equips a news organization to cover its community. Karen Jurgensen, editorial page editor of *USA Today*, recently concluded that "[D]iversity in gender and ethnic origin clearly translate into diversity in news judgment. The content of U.S. newspapers--- particularly what appears on 1A--- has been broadened somewhat by having more women and minorities in newsrooms and news meetings" (Jurgensen, 1993, p. 88). She cited rape awareness, a topic pushed to the forefront by Geneva Overholser, editor of the *Des Moines Register*, when she advocated naming rape victims in news accounts, a controversial position that defies many newspaper policies and state shield laws.

The U.S. Congress has recognized the importance of diversity in the news media by enacting legislation that gives women and minorities certain preferences in the acquisition of broadcast properties (Splichal, 1992). By increasing the numbers of minority and women "gatekeepers"--- those who decide what news will be covered and how--- alternative perspectives of news are possible.

Following the reasoning that minorities and women *do* potentially approach news situations differently, a study was undertaken in part to explore how newspaper managers respond to situations involving disclosure of private information. Some of the situations, on topics taken out of the headlines in recent years, involved subjects about which women arguably might have different sensibilities: news coverage of extramarital affairs, sexual harassment, and abortion. For reasons stated above, the primary research hypothesis of this paper is:

> *Female editors will respond differently from their male counterparts to hypothetical privacy reporting situations, especially those in which women might be expected to have different sensitivities.*

METHODS

Considering the apparent shift in media attitudes and standards governing reporting about the intimate affairs of politicians, a national study was undertaken to determine how newspapers are dealing with privacy issues. This study gathered data from a national telephone survey of randomly sampled daily newspaper editors. The editors were asked about their policies and practices dealing with reporting about the private affairs of public figures.

Data were collected to gain insight into the research focal points discussed above. A sample was drawn from the daily newspaper population of the United States in late spring 1993, a considerable period of time after the national coverage of Anita Hill's sexual harassment allegations against U.S. Supreme Court Justice nominee Clarence Thomas, but before the news coverage of the sexual harassment revelations involving Oregon Sen. Robert Packwood.

An interval sample was drawn using the state-by-state listings of daily newspapers contained in the 1993 edition of the *Editor & Publisher International Yearbook* (Phillips, 1993). The sample design yielded a sample of 405 newspapers. Newspapers were contacted by telephone interviewers. Interviewers were instructed to contact the office of the managing editor, or an equivalent level editor, to conduct the interview. A total of 283 editors representing their newspapers participated in the study, a response rate of 70 percent. Six newspaper editors refused to participate when contacted by an interviewer while others simply did not take or return repeated telephone calls. The margin of error for all items in this study is plus or minus 5.2 percent with a confidence level of 95 percent.

The telephone protocol was an instrument of 27 total variables; four of the variables were coded using the *Editor & Publisher International Yearbook 1993* or other sources before the interview. The instrument was pretested with about one dozen telephone calls to newspapers not selected in the final sample from across the United States. Interviewers were graduate students or undergraduate seniors under the direct supervision of the authors. Interviews were conducted for a three-week period in April and early May 1993. Data were analyzed using statistical procedures contained in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (Norsuis, 1991).

FINDINGS

The 283 responding newspapers have a mean daily circulation of 36,773 and a mean newsroom staff size of 58 persons as shown in Table 1. Respondents representing the newspapers are veterans with an average of 18.2 years of experience, and their newspapers represented all 50 states with the majority located in the Midwest and the South. Respondents were mostly the newspapers' editors, executive editors, or managing editors (79.6 percent— all reported percentages are adjusted to exclude missing data), and the remaining respondents were in other editorial management positions. Most were male (81.4 percent) and well-educated (12 percent with a graduate degree and 81.6 percent with at least a college degree).

Analysis of the 15 privacy issues investigated in this study for differences across newspaper editor gender yielded few statistically significant differences, as shown in Table 2. The research hypothesis, that there would be differences, is not supported. Of the 15 measures of news reporting about private matters, only three were statistically significant. The following is a summary of the analysis:

- *Coverage of extramarital affairs*--- There was no significant difference between men and women journalists over the issue of whether extramarital affairs are covered or not. Women (75.0%) and men (73.7%) both strongly believe such news should be covered. Only about 9% of both groups had no opinion.

- *Amount of attention paid to personal lives*--- There was a statistically significant difference found on this variable. While just over half of both men (56.0%) and women editors (54.9%) felt "too much" attention was paid, distinctions occurred among those who felt coverage is the "right amount" (39.6% of men, 33.3% of women) and "too little" (no men, 5.9% of women).

- *Response to work of competition*--- There was no significant difference over how men and women would respond to the coverage of a competing publication about a candidate's affair. About two-thirds of both groups said they would check out the charges and about one-quarter said they would ignore the charge.

- *Discovery of a candidate's affair*--- There was no significant difference between men and women on the issue of disclosure of news that a candidate was having an affair. The largest single groups of men (49.6%) and women (44.0%) said they would probably *not* disclose the information, while 32.6% of men and 40.0% of women said they would probably disclose the information.

- *Family values candidate having an affair*--- There was no significant difference on this variable. Both men and women editors believe in disclosure when the hypocrisy element enters the equation. About one-third (37.8% of men; 31.4% of women) said they would definitely disclose, and about one half (49.1% of men; 49.0% of women) said they would probably reveal the information in their newspapers.

- *Steps taken if an affair is discovered*— There was no significant difference in how to approach covering a candidate discovered having an affair. Less than one-tenth would do nothing and most would do nothing unless other circumstances were involved (45.9% of men; 37.3% of women). About one-third of both men (30.3%) and women (33.3%) editors said they would seek reliable sources before reporting the story.

- *Report about a candidate's illness*—This was one of the three statistically different measures. Men and women did not agree about coverage of personal illnesses of candidates. Gender difference was perhaps most distinct when it came to illness. Men more strongly feel that such a story should be reported. A total of 89.3% of men said it is very likely or somewhat likely that a story about the illness of a candidate will be reported. Only 68.0% of women said it would be very likely or somewhat likely. About one-third of women replied they would probably not run such a story and only one in ten men gave the same replies.

- *Report about a candidate's college cheating*— There was no significant difference. Men and women have high levels of agreement on cheating: It is not a story worth reporting. A total of 76.1% of men and 73.0% of women said it was not very likely or very unlikely their newspapers would report a story about a candidate cheating in college.

- *Report about a candidate's crime record*— There were statistically significant differences on this variable. Men seem to be more "hard line" about crime than women. A total of 94.2% of men editors said it was either very likely or somewhat likely they would report about previous criminal activity of a candidate for public office. While 86.0 percent of women editors said the same thing, 10.0% of women said they were not inclined to run the story.

- *Report about a candidate's sexual harassment*--- There was no significant difference on the harassment issue, although it would seem to be one of the more volatile social issues upon which a difference would be found. While women seem more inclined to run harassment stories (40.6% of men; 55.1% of women), these differences can occur by chance too often to be significant.

- *Report about a candidate's use of abortion*--- There was no significant difference on the abortion issue, another socially controversial matter, as well. Divisions among these editors do not occur on gender lines. A total of 71.5% of men and 66.7% of women is very likely or somewhat likely to run a story about a pro-life candidate involved in an abortion.

- *Report about a candidate's drug treatment*--- There was no significant difference about candidates involved in drug treatment. About two-thirds of both men and women editors said they would likely cover and one-third would not cover such a story.

- *Report about a candidate's depression*--- There was no significant difference on the second health issue. Both men and women seemed less inclined to cover depression involving a candidate than they would other, less specific, illnesses. A total of 50.2% of men and 62.0% of women would tend not to cover a story about a candidate's bout with depression.

- *Perceived interest levels of readers in intimate details*--- There was no significant difference on this variable. Both men and women editors believe their readers are very interested or somewhat interested (92.9% of men; 88.2% of women) in the intimate details of public persons.

- *Effect of reporting about private matters on credibility*--- There was no significant difference in how editors perceive the effects of reporting about intimate personal information. Both men and women strongly feel it very much or somewhat "hurts" credibility (76.0% of men; 82.0% of women).

CONCLUSIONS

The results reported in this study do not fully support the assumption that women would act different from men in certain situations. In only three of the fifteen measures were there differences in how men and women news managers would respond to specified ethical situations about the private lives of public persons. There are several possible explanations:

One explanation is that women news managers are inherently no different from men on the subjects covered by the questionnaire. Another is that there is a common set of principles guiding all journalists--- men and women--- that are instilled through journalism education and the general newspaper socialization process. Perhaps a more interesting theory is that women simply adopt the norms of male-dominated news operations and any natural differences that might have existed are subordinated to organization norms. Quite possibly, women who achieve management positions traditionally have been rewarded for conformity in addition to achievement. To survive, let alone prosper, women may support the norms of their news organization--- especially in high-profile situations that arise when news managers must ask themselves hard questions.

The virtual absence of gender differences on abortion, sexual harassment, and extramarital affairs is puzzling. While some might expect women to be more (or less) sympathetic than men on certain of these issues, the study results indicate no significant differences. There is no doubt about the mixed approaches taken on these fascinating subjects. There is no universal set of guidelines in journalism that have been accepted as the way to handle stories involving private lives of public people. In a field populated with quasi professionals who cannot agree on what general ethical guidelines are needed or how to police themselves over the adherence to those guidelines, how can journalists be expected to agree on something as elusive as how to handle privacy issues? No one seems to know for sure what "counts" in making decisions about supporting or not supporting the candidacy of a person for public office. For some voters, it is important to know about such things as family values, health issues, honesty, and personal integrity. For others, it is more important to know about positions on important national and international issues. As editors try to find the lowest common denominator, it has been the best solution, it seems in recent years, to put everything out on the table and let the readers pick and choose. The findings in this study suggest men and women do not disagree with that approach.

One thing is for certain: The ranges of values of news-editorial department managers seem no different from the public at large. For some participants in this study, intimate details about candidates do matter. For others, the "dirt" about potential leaders *might* be news. And for a few, these issues do not "count" in how they cover the people who would be president. Perhaps greater uniformity of policy is the solution. The data indicate that journalistic standards are a long way from any agreement on what matters and what does not in covering public people. If this study had included focus on other types of public figures, such as entertainers or sports personalities, it is likely the findings would have been even further confounded. There would not have been gender differences, if these findings are indicative of anything. It seems, as with other ethical issues, the more journalists know about a situation, the less certain they are about it. There is no single agreed-upon way to handle these matters. Years ago, the policy was simple: Look the other way. Now that many news organizations look these issues squarely in the face, they feel compelled not to ignore them. Journalists just have not figured out what to do about writing about intimate matters and, while we know there is a price to pay for it, we have not conclusively decided if the price is worth paying. For now, it looks as if men and women do not differ on these matters. While journalists have not decided how to handle many of these situations, at least there is agreement among men and women about that.

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TABLE 1: RESPONDENT NEWSPAPER DEMOGRAPHICS

(For all variables below, n = 283)

Mean newspaper circulation	36,772.9 copies
Mean years of experience as a journalist	18.2 years
Mean number of newsroom employees	58.1 persons

Ownership:

Value Label	n	Percent
Group	204	72.1
Nongroup	79	27.9

Region of newspaper location:

Value Label	n	Percent
East	45	15.9
South	97	34.3
Midwest	87	30.7
West	54	19.1

Job title of respondent

Value Label	n	Percent
Editor, executive editor	102	36.0
Managing Editor or AME	117	41.3
Assistant to editor or ME	7	2.5
Section editor	35	12.4
Other not list above	14	4.9
Missing	8	2.8

Gender of respondent

Value Label	n	Percent
Male	227	80.2
Female	52	18.4
Missing	4	1.4

Highest level of respondent's education

Value Label	n	Percent
High school or less	15	5.3
Some college but no degree	37	13.1
College degree	171	60.4
Some graduate school	26	9.2
Graduate degree	34	12.0

TABLE 2: GENDER DIMENSIONS OF PRIVACY ISSUES
(For all variables below, n=283)

Coverage of extramarital affairs

Value Label	Male	Female
Yes	73.7%	75.0%
No	17.1	15.4
Don't know	9.2	9.6

Chi square = 0.086 (df=2), p=0.958.

Attention paid to public officials' personal lives

Value Label	Male	Female
Too much	56.0%	54.9%
Right amount	39.6	33.3
Too little	0.0	5.9
Not sure	4.4	5.9

Chi square = 13.85 (df=3), p=0.003.

Response to story by competition...

Value Label	Male	Female
Consider it news	8.2%	3.9%
Check out charge	66.7	68.6
Ignore the charge	22.8	27.5
Don't know	2.3	0.0

Chi square = 2.59 (df=3), p=0.459.

Disclosure if respondent's newspaper discovers a candidate's affair...

Value Label	Male	Female
Definitely disclose	5.8%	2.0%
Probably disclose	32.6	40.0
Probably not disclose	49.6	44.0
Definitely not disclose	4.0	8.0
Don't know	8.0	6.0

Chi square = 3.67 (df=4), p=0.453.

Disclosure about a 'family values' candidate having an affair...

Value Label	Male	Female
Definitely disclose	37.8%	31.4%
Probably disclose	49.1	49.0
Probably not disclose	9.9	11.8
Definitely not disclose	0.9	2.0
Don't know	2.3	5.9

Chi square = 2.90 (df=4), p=0.574.

If candidate has an affair, what do you do?

Value Label	Male	Female
Nothing at all	9.6%	7.8%
Nothing, unless...	45.9	37.3
Ask the candidate	11.9	17.6
Seek reliable sources	30.3	33.3
Hire private investigator	0.5	0.0
Use surveillance	1.8	3.9

Chi square = 3.04 (df=5), p=0.694.

Would newspaper publish reports about candidate's personal illness?

Value Label	Male	Female
Very likely	42.2%	36.0%
Somewhat likely	47.1	32.0
Not very likely	7.2	20.0
Very unlikely	3.1	12.0
Don't know	0.4	0.0

Chi square = 16.49 (df=4), p=0.002.

Would newspaper write about candidate's college cheating?

Value Label	Male	Female
Very likely	5.4%	10.4%
Somewhat likely	16.2	16.7
Not very likely	49.1	43.8
Very unlikely	27.0	29.2
Don't know	2.3	0.0

Chi square = 2.96 (df=4), p=0.564.

Would newspaper report about candidate's crime record?

Value Label	Male	Female
Very likely	69.7%	72.0%
Somewhat likely	23.5	14.0
Not very likely	0.9	8.0
Very unlikely	0.9	2.0
Don't know	5.0	4.0

Chi square = 11.53 (df=4), p=0.021.

Would newspaper report about candidate's sexual harassment?

Value Label	Male	Female
Very likely	8.9%	18.4%
Somewhat likely	31.7	36.7
Not very likely	36.6	30.6
Very unlikely	17.9	10.2
Don't know	4.9	4.1

Chi square = 5.58 (df=4), p=0.233.

Would newspaper report about candidate's use of abortion?

Value Label	Male	Female
Very likely	33.5%	37.5%
Somewhat likely	38.0	29.2
Not very likely	17.2	14.6
Very unlikely	5.0	12.5
Don't know	6.3	6.3

Chi square = 4.72 (df=4), p=0.317.

Would newspaper report about candidate's drug treatment?

Value Label	Male	Female
Very likely	21.9%	22.0%
Somewhat likely	45.7	42.0
Not very likely	22.4	26.0
Very unlikely	6.8	10.0
Don't know	3.2	0.0

Chi square = 2.50 (df=4), p=0.645.

Would newspaper report about candidate's depression?

Value Label	Male	Female
Very likely	10.9%	14.0%
Somewhat likely	33.0	22.0
Not very likely	38.5	46.0
Very unlikely	12.7	16.0
Don't know	5.0	2.0

Chi square = 3.69 (df=4), p=0.449.

What is reader interest level regarding intimate details of public persons?

Value Label	Male	Female
Very interested	36.7%	35.3%
Somewhat interested	56.2	52.9
Not very interested	5.3	11.8
Very uninterested	0.9	0.0
Don't know	0.9	0.0

Chi square = 3.67 (df=4), p=0.452.

Does reporting about private matters hurt credibility?

Value Label	Male	Female
Hurts very much	11.6%	22.0%
Hurts somewhat	64.4	60.0
Doesn't hurt very much	19.1	18.0
Doesn't hurt at all	3.6	0.0
Don't know	1.3	0.0

Chi square = 5.91 (df=4), p=0.205.

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